



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

CARRYING RAINBOWS OF HOPE

Liturgical resources for use after disaster
and personal tragedies



Edited by Philip Liebelt

**Lord, let me carry
a rainbow of hope
to the victims
of life's storms ...
make my life a bridge
from your caring heart
to the world.**

B.J. HOFF

**“The Father of compassion ...
comforts us in all our troubles,
so that we can comfort
those in any trouble
with the comfort we ourselves
have received from God.”**

2 Corinthians 1:3b-4 (NIV)

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FOREWORD

The National Disaster Fund Trust Committee, which is an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia, is delighted to sponsor and make available this publication “Carrying Rainbows of Hope”. These liturgical resources for use after disasters and personal tragedies have been collected and edited by Rev Philip Liebelt, a mammoth task indeed. The Trust is grateful for his dedicated work.

Although the Trust is very happy to sponsor and fund this publication, it wishes to emphasise that in so doing it is not necessarily endorsing each of these resources. The resources have been gathered from a variety of places at different points in time – from national disaster and also individual deaths following accidents or disease contracted in the workplace, stillbirths, death of newborn babies and suicides. They are designed to present others with ideas and precedents on which they can build as the need arises. The material on individual grief is a valuable part of this compilation, as it helps in gaining an understanding of community grief. Many of these resources would be irrelevant if simply reproduced and used in different circumstances.

The Trust hopes that as other resources are created and used, that they will be added and made available to the Church and the community for future use.

We pray that the use of all or part of this publication will prove to be a blessing to future victims of disasters and personal tragedies and to those seeking to minister to and support them.

Members of the National Disaster Fund Trust Committee

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January 2003

INTRODUCTION

In recent years some of the most horrific natural and human-initiated violent disasters in Australian modern history have occurred (some since this project was commissioned, and the collecting process began).

The Church has always been at the forefront in providing care and other relief after such disasters. It has provided liturgies as part of the ministry to those recovering from such tragedies, seeking to use worship to help people working through their grief, their rebuilding, and their understanding of what has happened.

There was a need for a collection of Australian worship resources that have come out of these situations, to help clergy and other liturgists when they find themselves suddenly thrust into the middle of a local disaster. Contributors to this collection probably wish they had access to such a resource.

The National Disaster Recovery Consultative Group of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia commissioned me to make such a collection. This followed publication of *'Gentle Rain on Parched Earth'* (JBCE, Melbourne, 1996), which I co-edited with Rev Noel Nicholls and which included resources relevant to times of flood, fire, drought and mine disaster.

As I moved into the task it seemed important to also help people responding to personal tragedies, a more regular occurrence, especially when I became aware of the availability of some particularly useful resources. I believe that section will be helpful to any responding to such tragedies, but also in events that affect whole communities.

This final product is not just a liturgy collection - but a collection of stories. The strong link between liturgy and story is very evident in worship that responds to a community or private tragedy. In that sense it is like the Communion liturgy which has its foundation firmly in the Biblical Story.

Every tragedy has many stories. It is out of these stories the liturgy grows; and the worship service is a place these stories can and need to be heard. As Rex Hunt writes, it is in "the weaving of both story and deed that 'imaginative liturgy' happens and a healing process can begin." (p.146)

Some of the exciting feedback I received after "Gentle Rain" was published, was how people were using the worship resources in quite creative ways, by adapting them for different situations to those for which they were originally intended. There is no less scope for the current resources to be used creatively in many situations, even for non-tragic settings.

There are a number of liturgies I had hoped to include but was not able to. I also needed to remember that this is a collection for others, not a documented history of disaster liturgies of our times. In this sense it is good that I have been able to include a range of different types of services rather than just the same service used in different settings.

As already indicated, the stories are an important and exciting part of these liturgies, albeit frequently distressing. Another part of the story, that it was good to be able to include, was the processes by which some of the actual liturgies came about. This is important if we are to learn the lessons for use in other situations. It is not just a matter of finding a liturgy written out of a vaguely similar situation, and just changing a few details. Even with some help, our liturgies still must grow out of the particular circumstances and the community in which they occur.

To encourage creative use of this collection, and out of respect for victims and others represented in many of these services, names have been deliberately excluded. Even in the case of identifying who took part in a service, titles have been used rather than names, remembering this is meant to be an instructive collection rather than an archival one.

Writers of the original liturgies have made decisions about what to include in their services which some of us may not agree with. It has not been my brief to rewrite these liturgies. However it is expected that those who subsequently use these services to develop their own, will make their own decisions about what is appropriate for inclusion in the circumstances to which they are responding.

It should also be noted that the task of this book did not include comment on the wider issues of pastoral care, counselling, the provision of relief aid and other ministries. Whilst some of these are touched on, their absence is intentional.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of my family, Helen, DeeJay and Ty, during the protracted preparation time involved with this book, which included a number of life changes for us. I would also like to thank Kaye Mitchell, whose encouragement has been appreciated, and whose creative use of liturgical resources is something I would wish upon all liturgists. Thanks also to Rev John Major who initially nominated me to prepare this collection; and the Consultative Group, which gave me such an exciting, whilst at times emotionally challenging, project - and was patient in its slow preparation.

Rev Philip Liebelt
Editor

POSTSCRIPT

The production of this collection has been spread out over a long period of time. Most of the inclusions were collected between 1997 and 1999. A number of tragedies have occurred in Australia and overseas since then, the most famous no doubt being the USA terrorism attacks on September 11th, 2001 and the Bali bombing on October 12th 2002. Some resources in relation to these disasters have also been included. Hopefully this resource will help people to reflect on these subsequent events and how to respond to them liturgically.

The Editor and the National Disaster Recovery Consultative Group thank all those who have contributed pieces for inclusion, and apologise for the delay. It is recognised that some may have moved on in their settlements. Whilst efforts have been made to correct information, there may be some material that has not been updated. We apologise for this if it is a cause for any concern.

LITURGIES

Bus Crash at Maryborough, Queensland

On October 24th 1994, a bus crashed near Maryborough in Queensland killing the driver and eleven local older women. The accident shocked the town, not only because of the number who were killed but because the victims were well-known and loved members of the community.

Later that day, ministers of the town met and planned a service to be held on the following night. At that stage the names of those who had been killed had not yet been released, but it was important to help the community with their shock and initial grief.

This was to be the first of three services over a year; all three are reproduced here. All were ecumenical services that were prepared and led by members of the local Ministers Fellowship. At the head of the sheets for the later services, those who had died were listed.

A Service of Grief and Prayer

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Maryborough, Queensland
25th October 1994

WELCOME:

Leader: Jesus Christ is the light of the world,
People: the light no darkness can overcome.

L: Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening,
P: and the day is almost over.

L: Let your light scatter darkness,
P: and illumine your church.

L: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN.

HYMN: "The Lord is my Shepherd"

PSALM 130:

Leader: Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord;
O Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.
If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins,
O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness;
therefore you are feared.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
and in His word I put my hope.
My soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning.
O Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.
He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins

A PRAYER FOR ALL VICTIMS OF THE ACCIDENT:

L. A reading from the book of Isaiah, chapter 40, beginning at verse 1:

.....

This is the Word of the Lord.

P: Thanks be to God!

PASTORAL ADDRESS:

HYMN: "Amazing Grace"

A PRAYER FOR THE EMERGENCY WORKERS WHO ATTENDED THE ACCIDENT:

L. A reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 8, beginning at verse 18.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it in patience. ...

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord.

P: Thanks be to God!

CIVIC ADDRESS:

A PRAYER FOR OUR CITY'S GRIEF:

PSALM 46

L: God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.
There is a river whose streams make glad
the city of God.
God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.
Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.
The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

PRESENTATION: *Understanding our Grief*

A PRAYER FOR CAREGIVERS, AND OUR CITY'S RECOVERY

HYMN: "To God be the Glory, Great Things He has done"

THE LORD'S PRAYER: *(said together)*

CLOSING PRAYER:

L: Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures the ending of which we cannot see, by paths yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

L: The Almighty and Merciful Lord, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.

AMEN.

Memorial Service

for those who died and suffered
in the Bus Tragedy on 24th October 1994

(Held about three weeks later)

Maryborough City Hall

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP:

L: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of all mercy and the God of all consolation. He comforts us in all our sorrows so that we can comfort others in their sorrows with the consolation we ourselves have received from God.

P: Thanks be to God.

PRAYER:

HYMN: "Our God, our Help in Ages past"

(During the singing of the hymn, candles were lit in memory of those who died.)

READING: Psalm 121

OUR TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO DIED AND WHO HAVE SUFFERED:

- * The Mayor of Maryborough
- * The President of Maryborough Civilian Widows Assoc.
- * A Grandchild of one of those who died

A TIME OF REMEMBRANCE:

SOLO:

PRAYERS FOR ALL WHO MOURN AND SUFFER AT THIS TIME:

READINGS: Exodus 3:1-8
John 14: 1-6

OFFERING FOR THE MAYOR'S DISTRESS FUND:

HYMN: "Be still, my Soul: the Lord is on your Side"

PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER: *(said together)*

PRESENTATION OF THE MEMORIAL CANDLES:

HYMN: "Thine be the Glory, risen, conquering Son"

BENEDICTION:

Dedication Service

One year after the Accident

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME:

L: Friends in Christ: our heavenly Father has taken our sisters and brother:

(The Christian names and Surnames of those who died are named as printed on service sheet.)

We remember them and thank God for what he has given us through them. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN.

L: Our Lord says: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

And the Apostle Peter says: "Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

ACT OF REMEMBRANCE AND UNVEILING OF THE PLAQUE:

by the Mayor of Maryborough

ACT OF DEDICATION:

L: With faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, this memorial has been unveiled, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May this plaque be set apart as a memorial to those whom we have lost, and for the glory of God.

AMEN.

L: Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, our good shepherd. We thank you for:

Gladys, Phoebe, Josephine, Mavis, Iva,

Rita, Mary, Joyce, Barbara, Thelma,

Eileen and Luke,

and the blessings that flowed from their lives. As you have been with them in the valley of the shadow of death, be with us who continue to mourn. Comfort us in our sorrow. Heal our hurt. Restore our happiness and guide us in your way. Remember us all in life and death; refresh us with your goodness and bring us at last into your eternal home, where we will feast together at your table; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

AMEN.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: *(said together)*

BENEDICTION:

L: The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

AMEN.

The Port Arthur Tragedy

What has become known as the Port Arthur tragedy occurred on Sunday 28th April 1996. Port Arthur is an historical site in Tasmania, being a former convict penal colony. On that day in April a lone gunman shot and killed 35 men, women and children and seriously wounded a further 29 people. The victims, their relatives and others were admitted to Royal Hobart Hospital.

Eight days after these events, staff of the Royal Hobart Hospital was invited to gather in the fore-court of the hospital and to share in a Service of Restoration. They were invited to bring with them some symbols of their work to place on a hospital bed making a tableau.

The service was timed to occur between the morning and afternoon shifts. More than 400 staff attended the service. Liturgy for the service was shaped by the chaplains and some social workers/counsellors at the hospital.

Rev Rex Hunt

At the time of the tragedy Rex ministered in Scots Church part of the Hobart City Centre Parish (Tasmania) of the Uniting Church in Australia and was a chaplain at the Royal Hobart Hospital. He wrote the following article and the sermon that follows the Service of Restoration. He now ministers at St James, Curtin Woden Uniting Church, Canberra.

Service of Restoration

Royal Hobart Hospital

6th May, 1996

GATHERING:

L1 : This afternoon we remember those whom we have attempted to serve to the best of our ability.

This service-gathering is to allow all members of our hospital community to once again join together to share our support for each other and allow us time to reflect,

and connect with our thoughts and feelings
concerning our roles in the events of the past week.

We acknowledge the bond and the compassion which has developed between many people in this past week who, in some cases,
had previously known little of each other
or of their work.

It has been a week where boundaries between professions were forgotten, and we worked together as one team.

We mark with pride the many achievements,
known and unknown,
which we as a community of healing
have fulfilled.

We recognise not simply the many
that were called upon to fulfil extra duties
outside their normal working pattern,
but those who worked maintaining the ongoing life and
healing nature of this place.

L 2 : This gathering today expresses our close relationship with each other under God, whose love and power extend over all creation.

Every life - every life - (including our own)
is precious to God.

We pray that God's healing breath will blow across this grass and into every corner of this hospital...

Every passage,
every ward,
every room,
into the stairwells and lifts,
the theatres,
and all places of treatment.
Waiting rooms,
offices,
the kiosk.

Every place where people have gathered,
waited,
watched.

During the playing of some music,
we invite those of you who have done so,
to bring and place some object of care or service
as a symbol of the contribution which we have made
individually and collectively
toward the care of the injured,
those who died
and the many who have come to us
filled with despair and sadness.

MUSIC: “Second Movement of Concierto d’Aranjuez” by Joaquin Rodrigo

POETRY: “Blessed are the sorrowing. They shall be consoled”

REFLECTION:

We have given our best to serve
the many who have come needing care.
The shocked.
The injured.
The grieving.
The dead.

And there were of course the many
who were already here as patients
and who still required care.
And this we did.

For this is still a place of healing
and the healing power of God
is not diminished
by all that has taken place within and without its walls.

I think each one of us
has been extended beyond what we may have thought possible.

We are tired,
the strain still shows in people’s eyes and faces.
Into our ordered life
was placed an event which
displaced our order,
disrupted our routine,
changed our plans,
altered our future,
challenged our understandings of
right and wrong,
evil and good.

This tableau of service which we have offered unstintingly
stands as a memorial not only to the dead and injured
but to us as healers and carers.

It was my intention that it would remain for a while
as a memorial of ourselves.

I think it would be better if, as we leave,
we take up again our tools of service,
our symbols of our work of care.

Taking them with pride and honour and with hope;
using them to reclaim this place as ours.

As a place of service,
of healing,
of wholeness.
A place of God.

We cannot deny any of the events that have passed.
But in the strength of the knowledge of our working together
under God,

we can move forward with confidence and hope
into this new week,
saddened by the events,
stronger and wiser
and more compassionate by the experience.

Now,

may the light of God's face shine upon us
to dispel the fog of sorrow which dampens our Spirit.
And may God's presence walk with us
as we enter and leave these doors,
as we walk upon this grass
and move within the hospital.

so that we come and go again with lightness of step,
free of anxiety and apprehension.

READING: 1 Corinthians 12 (Selected verses)

THE INVITATION:

** Representatives of the five groups: Administration, Nursing, Medical, Therapies, Others, bring their balloons together at the front.*

These balloons are also a symbol of us.

The colours are our colours.

Each is separate as we are separate.

Together we make a mighty colourful bunch
and that is what we are.

READING: 1 Corinthians 13: 1-8a.

** As the balloons are released, people are invited to take a sprig of green as a symbol of renewed hope and life. People also take their symbols of service.*

MUSIC: "A Lark Ascending" by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

** The balloons and their colouring is explained in the article "Liturgy, Liturgists and Port Arthur" on p155. In that article there is also a comment about what happened spontaneously as participants moved forward to take their sprig of green.*

In the Aftermath of Port Arthur

A sermon preached one week later
At Scots Uniting Church, Hobart
By Rev Rex Hunt

*“Life as a whole never takes death seriously.
It laughs dances and plays.
It builds, goes fishing, studies and loves in
Death’s face.”*

Those of you who, last Tuesday, shared with me in the Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Jessie Knight, will recognise I began my homily on that occasion with those words.

In light of all the events which have happened in and around Port Arthur since we gathered in this place last Sunday, I felt it was appropriate I should begin today’s sermon with those same words.

They are not my words,
but from my own life experience
I feel they are true.

I do live life without much thought of death.
My death.

And this is despite the fact that I work as a hospital chaplain and am called out at all hours of the day or night to be with people who are dying.

Death is the greatrupturer which evokes powerful emotions that need to be vented or calmed.
Be it the death of a loved one likeJessie,
or be it a tragedy that confronts the community
such as what happened last Sunday at Port Arthur.

ooOoo

Life does seem to offer us a paradox.
On the one hand,
nothing in the world is more precious
than one single human person.

On the other hand,
nothing in the world is more squandered,
more exposed to all kinds of dangers,
than the human being.

If I was to conduct an informal survey of you all this morning
I know you would be able to name many events
within the history of the world
where human life is both precious and squandered.

Now 'Port Arthur' can (once again)
take its place among those so named.

When confronted with death, we grieve.
We grieve for the one who has died.
We grieve for the families and friends.
We grieve for ourselves.

And in our grief we find many
of our brittle defences are broken down,
and we feel somewhat defenceless in the face
of a seemingly hostile and non-caring world.

ooOoo

How do we cope in the wake of Port Arthur?
And as I think about it,
'wake' is an appropriate word.

Following the release of news items about Port Arthur in the media,
many friends and former work colleagues on the mainland
rang Dylis (*my wife*) to see how I was coping.

They knew that as chaplain to the Royal (*Hobart Hospital*)
I would be in the thick of it.
And in their helplessness (their word)
they wanted to reassure me of their thoughts,
their concerns, their love and their prayers.

And that contact was much needed and very much appreciated.

But it was when we opened Scots Church for prayer
and people called in ...
and when I began to return some of those phone calls
and chat with some of the people that I began to hear
stories of connection ...

- * a son had a mate who had two mates who were killed;
- * a mother who with her two daughters had visited Port Arthur the day before;
- * a neighbour who was the brother of three people who were killed;
- * a person who had car trouble, so visitors hired a car and drove down themselves, only to be killed;
- * a person who felt he too might do what the alleged gunman had done and, because of his state of mind, committed suicide because he was so frightened of himself;
- * a mother who, on hearing her son had been seriously wounded and her daughter-in-law killed, suffered a heart attack and died.

When you drop a stone in a lake
many ripples flow from that rupture,
spreading over the surface of the lake.

When you drop 35 stones into a lake all at once,
the ripples flow and crisscross in violent reaction
over the entire surface of the lake.

ooOoo

So how do we cope in the wake of Port Arthur?

When I first set out to prepare this sermon,
I confess I had little idea how to answer this question.

So I asked myself: Rex, how are you coping?

In light of the answers I gave myself
I offer them to you
in the hope they may be a healing gift
which you can use and share and be blessed by.

* The first thing I felt I had was a strong belief
which has shaped my theology for the past 25 years
that God is a compassionate God,
who shares our journeys of sorrow and grief,
as well as our times of laughter and joy.

And that I did not have to defend God in the face of evil.
God was already there. Weeping.

* The second thing I felt I had was a belief that
in the telling and listening to the stories
I, and we, could find the clues for coping.

This is what happened to the grieving and bewildered disciples
on the road to Emmaus.

This is what can happen to us.

* And the third thing I felt I had,
or rather benefited from, was community.

It was in the phone calls, the letters, the flowers
and the faxes that I realised I too was not alone ...
that I did not have to nor was I expected to,
cope alone.

And you know, with a touch of hindsight,
I began to realise all over again:
is this not what happens each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper.
We gather together ...
we hear the stories ...
we break the bread ...
all in the presence of a compassionate God
who has shared our journeys before us.

ooOoo

When being interviewed by a journalist from ABC radio
a few days after the events,
I told him an incident in my pilgrimage
around the Isle of Iona, in Scotland.

I won't tell you that now, but I will share with you some words
which are part of a liturgy from the Iona Community.

It's part of their Tuesday night healing service ...
a healing service which I believe does justice
to a compassionate God
rather than the ego
of a charismatic preacher!

The words are the words of healing:
"Spirit of the living God,
present with us now,
enter you, body, mind and spirit,
and heal you of all that harms you ..."

As I reflect over the events of this past week
and my small part in it, as part of a bigger team,
I believe I have heard those words many times.
And they are helping to heal me.

Maybe they can be healing words for you as well.

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Order of Service

To Mark the Anniversary

Of the Tragedy at Port Arthur

28th April 1997

Wesley Church

Uniting Church in Australia,

Lonsdale St, Melbourne

MUSIC BEFORE THE SERVICE:

“Oh, How Blest are You Whose Toils are Ended” - Pau Bourman

“Have Mercy Upon Me, O Lord” - J.S. Bach

“In Memorium Opus 71 No. 3” - Flor Peeters

INTROIT: “Set me as a Seal upon your Heart”: Song of Solomon - John Leavitt
(Victorian Chorale Tuesday Singers)

WELCOME:

HYMN: “Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven”

THE GATHERING AND CALL TO WORSHIP:

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

L: Some of us here this morning are victims of the Port Arthur tragedy. Others of us, not touched directly by its trauma, are here as supporters and encouragers to those whose lives were forever changed one year ago today. Together, we join in this service knowing that God, who has always walked with those who suffer, welcomes us to this holy place as we recall the terror and loss of life which occurred that day. Today, in Hobart and in Port Arthur, others are gathering as we are. We are one with them on this emotional day.

We light a candle as a sign of the Christian faith that the goodness of God has triumphed over evil.

We receive a basket of daffodil bulbs which will be given to worshippers as they leave at the close of the service, as a promise of new life.

Let us pray.

Holy and gracious God, here in this place and at this harrowing time, give us the freedom to be honest before you, the honesty to seek courage, and the courage to ask your blessing. And, as Jesus taught us, we pray:

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

READING: John 15: 1-8, 12-14 *(Read by a Port Arthur Survivor)*

HYMN: "The Lord's My Shepherd"

READING: 1 Corinthians 15: 12-22 (*Read by a De-briefer, Dept. of Human Services*)

ADDRESS: *By a Chaplain at Royal Hobart Hospital*

REFLECTIVE SILENCE:

PRAYER:

For those who have died

L: Almighty and eternal God,
you have given us life in all its fullness
that through it we may know your love and compassion.
We remember before you those who have been taken from us
in so untimely and tragic a way. We thank you for their love and
their warmth, and for the joy received through knowing them.
On the cross, your Son our Saviour commended his spirit into your hands:
we commend into your keeping those who have died that,
in your infinite love and mercy, they may know eternal light
and rest in your presence in the day of their resurrection:
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

For those who mourn

Compassionate Lord,
you suffered in the giving of your dear Son to death for our sakes.
Strengthen with your blessing those families
who suffer now in the loss of their loved ones.
Support them in their grief;
where there is anger bring them the calm of your peace;
and enable them to move on in their lives in the knowledge
that they are never alone but surrounded by your everlasting mercy
and goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

For those who survived

Gracious God, your Son Jesus Christ came that we might have,
and know, life in all its richness.
We give you thanks for those whose lives were spared
in the face of this shocking tragedy.
As we contemplate the sacredness of all human life,
keep us as a community ever-watchful of the ways
in which we can protect your sacred gift of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

For the perpetrator of this tragedy

Eternal God, from his cross of shame your Son forgave those who conspired to put him to death.
Give us the strength, and help us through your grace, to move beyond vengeance towards him who perpetrated this horror to forgiveness and pity in the circumstances which led to such a crime. In his anguish, may he know remorse and your forgiveness.
May the offering in prayer of our forgiveness be the beginning of our own peace.

These things we ask in the name of our murdered, risen and victorious Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

SILENT PRAYER:

SOLO: *"In Paradisum" (From the Catholic Book of Worship)*

PRAYER:

For those in caring roles

Gracious God, your Son Jesus Christ brought good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed.
We thank you for the gifts of all people in the caring professions: for chaplains, counsellors, doctors and nursing staff, and all other supporting agencies.
May their work be the face of your presence to all those in their care. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

For those in essential services

Almighty God, your Son commanded us to love you with all of our being and our neighbours as ourselves.
Bless those who watch over the well-being of your people through human services, the para-medical teams, the police force and the fire departments.
We thank you for their keen sense of duty and their care for all people; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

For those who administer justice

Loving God,
it is your will that all people live in peace and be governed justly. We remember those who administer justice amongst us - police, lawyers and judges. May they fulfil their responsibilities with integrity, that those who are brought to account may be judged rightly for the good of society and the secure confidence of all people. We ask it in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our risen Lord and Saviour.

AMEN.

SILENT PRAYER:

READING FROM DUNBLANE*:

O Father, on your love we call.
When sorrow overshadows all,
And pain that feels too great to bear
Drives from us any words of prayer,
 Enfold in love for evermore
 All those we love, but see no more.

Our children, innocent and dear,
Were strangers to a world of fear,
Each precious life had more to give,
In each, our hopes and dreams could live.
 Enfold in love for evermore
 All those we love, but see no more.

So brief, the joy since each was born,
So long the years in which we mourn;
Give us compassion to sustain
Each other in this time of pain;
 Enfold in love for evermore
 All those we love, but see no more.

Guard us from bitterness and hate,
and share with us grief's crushing weight;
Help us to live from day to day,
Until, once more, we find our way;
 Enfold in love for evermore
 All those we love, but see no more.

When dark despair is all around,
And falling tears the only sound,
Light one small flame of hope and still
You walk with us, and always will;
 Enfold in love for evermore
 All those we love, but see no more.

Words: Jane Holloway 1996

HYMN: "Thine be the Glory, Risen, Conquering Son"

BLESSING:

PROCESSION & POSTLUDE: Paraphrase on a chorus from "Judas Maccabaeus"
of Handel - Alexandre Guilmant

NOTES:

Daffodil bulbs were given out to all who attended as they left.

An opportunity was given for those affected by the events of Port Arthur to meet in the church hall. This was closed to the media and public.

** This Prayer had been used at a service at Dunblane, Scotland.*

In the cathedral city of Dunblane in Scotland, a "sick, twisted man" had gone to the Primary School on Wednesday 13th March, with evil intentions. He shot dead sixteen five and six-year-old children along with their teacher, in the school gym, and wounded twelve of their classmates and two other teachers. Within three minutes he also was dead.

Hoddle Street & Strathfield Shopping Centre Massacres

Seven people were shot dead and another nineteen injured on Sunday August 9th, 1987, about 9.45pm., when a nineteen year old ex-Duntroon student opened fire on people walking or driving along Hoddle Street, Clifton Hill, an inner suburb of Melbourne. The killer who was said to be obsessed with violence, had been drinking heavily, being depressed by rejection from the army and in personal relationships. Apparently he desired to experience killing someone and being killed and was hopeful his actions would draw police. However, he surrendered to them and was later sentenced to life in prison.

“**On** the afternoon of Saturday 17th August 1991, a man sat for a long time drinking coffee in the coffee shop at Strathfield Plaza, in the Sydney suburb of Strathfield ... Without warning he drew a knife and stabbed a young (15 year old) girl nearby (to death), then shot at others in the coffee shop and elsewhere in the Plaza, as well as the street below, killing a total of seven people and wounding many others. He abducted a woman in her car, then alighted from the car and fatally shot himself... “

*Dr. Rod Milton, , Profile of a Mass Killer
Blackstone Press, 1994, p. xix.*

A Community Memorial Service of Reconciliation*

Hoddle St, Melbourne
Sunday 18th October, 1987

as it was amended for
Strathfield Shopping Centre, Sydney
Sunday 8th September, 1991

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Leader: Friends, we have come together to remember the tragic events that occurred here and to claim that even in the midst of this tragedy we can continue as a community.

It is by sharing the great events of our lives that we become a community. Both joyful events and tragedies. Separately we received the news of the shootings here, separately the victims fell.

But it is together that we acknowledge the event today, together we offer our sympathy and support to all who have been directly involved in this tragedy.

Together now we are taking a step to heal and we give testimony to the desire of the community to grow.
It is God who can bring about this healing.
We now ask him for that grace.

HYMN: "The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want"

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Selected from Isaiah ch. 59, ch. 58.
(The Hoddle St. Service used Genesis 2)

HOMILY:

PETITIONS:

Leader: Let us pray with confidence to God who absolves the past, directs the present and calls us into his future. We pray for this community of Strathfield. Through the bond of our common humanity, draw us together and make us one.
Lord, hear us.

People: Lord, hear our prayer.

L: We pray for all the communities of which we are a part,
and in whose life we share.
Lord, hear us.

P: Lord, hear our prayer.

- L: We acknowledge our involvement in the violence of our times through our lack of concern. Lord, hear us.
- P: Lord, hear our prayer.
- L: Nurture justice in us and a sense of the common good; save us from our anger and a delight in vengeance. Lord, hear us.
- P: Lord, hear our prayer.
- L: We pray for all who strengthen us; our families, our friends, our neighbours and the support services in this area. Lord, hear us.
- P: Lord, hear our prayer.
- L: We pray for the victims of violence, especially for those who fell here. Lord, hear us.
- P: Lord, hear our prayer.
- L: We pray for the families and friends of all who died here and we remember them in their grieving and their distress. Lord, hear us.
- P: Lord, hear our prayer.
- L: May our memorial to those who died also be our commitment to seek healing, peace and justice in this community. Lord, hear us.
- P: Lord, hear our prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: *(said together)*

ACT OF RECLAMATION:**

- L: We cannot live and grow when memory of the past overpowers us and keeps us in fear. So now we ask the good God to deliver us from suspicion and fear, to bless this tree and seeds as signs to us of new life and hope; and in God's name, we now reclaim this place for our community and for his glory.

Holy God,
you know the deep desires of our hearts before we ask,
and you will that we should live in peace and justice;
Deliver this place from the power of evil and from the memory of violence.
Release this community from the chains of past events
and plant in us the love of peace, the love of each other and the love of you;
Hallow this place and bless this tree and seeds that with them we may grow
towards your image in us.
We ask this in your name and in your strength.

AMEN.

L: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

P: And also with you.

L: During the Sign of Peace some people will enter the Plaza and exchange peace there. Please exchange a sign of peace with each other.

HYMN: "God has spoken by his Prophets"

BENEDICTION:

L: We have gathered together to remember the victims of this tragedy and to reclaim our life as a community. We go now from here remembering the tragic events but with a renewed desire for peace and harmony. As a sign of this commitment we take these seeds, signs of new life, to our own homes for planting.

Go now as bearers of peace.

NOTES:

The Hoddle St Memorial Service, included a tree planting ceremony at the end of the service, during which the Taize chant "We adore you, Lord" was sung.

* The Hoddle Street Service was called "A Community Memorial Service of Reconciliation"; the Strathfield Shopping Centre Service took a slightly different emphasis by omitting the last two words.

** *(Included in the Hoddle Street Service at this point, during the tree planting)*
This portion of the earth was made good and peaceful by God. But it has become a place of violence and death. As these trees cannot grow in soil that has been misused, so we cannot live and grow when the memory of the past overpowers us and keeps us in fear. So now we ask the good God to deliver us from suspicion and fear, to bless these trees as signs to us of new life and hope; and in God's name, we reclaim this place for our community and for his glory.

*** *(Included in the Hoddle Street Service at this point)*
From the dislocations of the past we begin to build a new community. We have formed a human circle, a symbol of unity and peace. As a sign of our commitment to the future, let us greet each other in the name of the God of peace.

The Hoddle Street service was put together by a group of local ministers, and the Strathfield liturgy by the Strathfield-Homebush Ministers Association led by Rev Michael Barnes of the Uniting Church in Australia and Fr. Paul Ryan, the local Catholic priest. The latter also drew on expertise used for a service after a bus crash at Kempsey, N.S.W.

Newcastle Earthquake

Although Australia has many areas at high risk of earthquakes, it has not experienced destruction to the extent of many other countries. Indeed in recent times there had been no loss of life and relatively little property damage by earthquakes in this country.

That is, until an earthquake struck in Newcastle, New South Wales, during the day of the 28th December 1989 killing thirteen people, injuring many others and causing significant property damage.

An ecumenical service was conducted at Christ Church Anglican Cathedral on 19th January 1990. It was to have been held on the 5th January, just a week after the disaster, but access to the inner city was still restricted to residents and emergency crews.

The liturgist was the Dean of the Cathedral, the Very Rev Graeme Lawrence.

A Service of Commemoration and Renewal

Christ Church Anglican Cathedral
Newcastle
Friday, January 19th, 1990

PROCESSION: Local and state denominational leaders process in.

HYMN: "All creatures of our God and King" (AHB 3)

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP:

The Dean: The City of Newcastle and the Churches of the Hunter welcome you to this Cathedral and we hope that this act of worship will encourage you, and the community at large, as we seek to rebuild and recreate our shattered lives.

We come to mourn and honour our earthquake dead:
to share our compassion with all who are bereaved and
saddened by the death of loved ones;
to express our communion with those who have been physically injured,
who have lost homes, possessions, businesses and means of livelihood.

We will also recognise the courage, heroism and efficient generosity of those who came to our rescue and rehabilitation with loving care; and offer our gratitude to those in our wider State and Nation who have given material and financial support for those in need.

We will intercede with God our Father that He strengthen and invigorate us in the days, weeks and months ahead so that we will truly "bear one another's burdens" and encourage each other in the building up of our own lives and that of our community.

Finally, trusting in the love of God, we will pledge ourselves anew to endeavour that all people in our community will find harmony, peace and happiness and that none will be left disadvantaged; affirming for ourselves a Biblical prophecy that

"those who look to the Lord will win new strength
they will soar as on eagles' wings
they will run and not feel faint
march on and not grow weary."

And so, my brothers and sisters in Christ, we will first pray to our Father, using with confidence the prayer that Jesus taught us. Let us say together -

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

THE EARTHQUAKE EVENT: Read by the Day Editor of the 'Newcastle Herald'

HYMN: "Our God, our Help in Ages Past" (AHB 46)

ADDRESS: By the Lord Mayor of Newcastle

PSALM 23: To a setting by Franz Schubert, sung by the Cathedral Choir.

READINGS:

Isaiah 40: 25-31 (Read by the Governor of NSW)
Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

Response: Thanks be to God.

Romans 8: 18-23, 35-39 (Read by the Bishop of Maitland)
Reader: This is the word of the Lord.

Response: Thanks be to God.

**THE COMMEMORATION AND THE MEMORIAL
OF THOSE WHO DIED AS A RESULT OF THE EARTHQUAKE:**

As the Dean read the name of each of the thirteen people who died, a memorial candle was lit from the Easter candle. The names were printed on the service sheet.

All: Lord, you alone are the source of life.
May your lifegiving Spirit flow through us.
Grant us your compassion one for the other.
In our sorrow give us the calm of your peace.
Kindle our hope,
and let our grief give way to joy:
through Jesus Christ our Lord

AMEN.

And for those who mourn:

ALL: Almighty God, Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort;
deal graciously, we pray, with those who mourn,
that, casting all their care on you,
they may know the consolation of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

HYMN: "Lead us, Heavenly Father, Lead us" (AHB 492)

THE HOMILY: By the Lord Bishop of Newcastle

The homily completed, the Bishop goes to a place at the Nave altar, together with the Heads of Churches for:

AN ACT AND PLEDGE OF RENEWAL:

Various basic gifts are laid on the altar brought from the congregation by diverse members of the community, and received by the Newcastle Church leaders. As each symbol is received, the Bishop, representing all the Church leaders, says "FATHER", and the congregation joins in with the words printed on the sheet.

First, implements from builders and the building trade are brought.

Receive and accept these building tools symbolising our desire to rebuild our community with honesty and integrity.

Second, a loaf of bread is brought.

Bread symbolises the staff of life:
Give us each day sufficient for our daily pilgrimage.
We will share our daily bread with the hungry.

Third, water is brought.

Accept this water which will symbolically cleanse,
refresh and restore us.
May its healing power bring us new life and hope.

Fourth, a family brings a length of rope.

This rope symbolises our desire to be tied in communion with each other;
to be linked in support of each other,
and to be united in a common desire to bear
one another's burdens.

Last, a young tree is brought.

The tree symbolises knowledge, life and growth.
We will grow in grace, planted by you, Father,
and watered by your continuing love.
May our fruits be harmony, peace, joy and happiness.

A moment's silence is observed.

Gracious Father, teach us to begin our works with reverence,
to go on in obedience,
and finish them with love;
and then to wait patiently in hope,
and with grateful hearts to look to you,
whose promises are faithful and gifts unending;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

A PRAYER OF GRATITUDE:

The Dean: God our Father, we are grateful for all those men and women who have shown love, care, compassion, support and courage in our time of need. We acknowledge the generosity of all who have been engaged in rescue, and the bringing of relief and comfort to those men, women and children who have suffered as a result of this earthquake.
Father, we thank You.

RESPONSE: Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

More particularly, we are grateful for rescue workers, ambulance, police, army and firefighting personnel, doctors and nurses, carers of children, carers of the aged, builders and engineers, Council staff, counsellors, chaplains, social service workers; and for all who have brought a touch of caring friendship into our lives during these stressful days.
Father, we thank You.

RESPONSE: Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We recognise, with thanksgiving, the spirit of solidarity and common concern which now binds us together and which will help us create and renew ourselves and our community.
Father, we thank You.

RESPONSE: Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

With your help, Father, we will win new strength.
We will soar as on angels' wings.
We will run and not feel faint.
We will press on and not grow weary.

We offer this thanksgiving in your name, Father,
with your Son, and with the Holy Spirit.

AMEN.

HYMN: "Now Thank we all our God" (AHB 14)

THE COMBINED BLESSING OF ALL CHURCH LEADERS:

Go forth into the world in peace;
be of good courage;
hold fast to that which is good;
render to no man evil for evil;
strengthen the faint-hearted;
support the weak; help the afflicted;
honour all people; love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with each one of you now,
in the days ahead, and remain with you always.

AMEN.

The Dean: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Response: In the name of Christ. **AMEN.**

The Blackhawk Accident

Australia's worst peacetime military accident occurred when two Blackhawk helicopters collided during a night training routine at Townsville, Queensland, on Wednesday 12th June 1996. As a result of the accident eighteen young soldiers were killed and ten others were injured.

This Memorial service was put together by Chaplain Father Jim Cosgrove of the Rochedale Catholic Church, Brisbane and was conducted at Our Lady, Queen of Apostles Church, Stafford, Queensland six days after the accident.

Memorial Service

for those who died in the Blackhawk Accident

Our Lady, Queen of Apostles Catholic Church
Stafford, Queensland
Tuesday 18th June 1996

HYMN: "Abide with Me"

WELCOME:

PRAYER:

Chaplain: O God, by whose power Christ was raised from the dead
giving us all the promise of eternal life,
lay your hand in loving kindness on all of us
who need your message of hope.
trusting in your mercy and kindness we come before you in prayer.

Eighteen Australian soldiers have tragically died.

All: May they be enjoying union with God,
their Father and our Father,
in eternal happiness.

C: Eighteen young Australians were killed whilst training
to keep our country safe.

A: We pledge ourselves to be vigilant of the safety
and defence of our country,
and ask for the courage and resolve
never to waver from this promise.

C: Eighteen groups of families and friends - spouse, parents, children,
sisters, brothers, extended family, mates and acquaintances are in sorrow.

A: May they be comforted by the knowledge of the resurrection.
May they receive sympathy and support from each other,
and be uplifted by memories of happier times.

C: Ten of our number survived the accident but not without injury.

A: We ask you, God, to extend your healing hand
and guide their recovery to full health.

C: Many people have been involved in this recent tragedy and hurt by its
devastation; people at the site in the Townsville Training Area, in Townsville
itself, in Perth, and in other parts of our country and overseas.

- A: May all these people, who recovered the dead, tended the injured and supported those in sorrow, receive reward for their goodness. May they be happy in knowing that their heroism and ministry have shown the human face of God.
- C: The community of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force has been devastated by this accident.
- A: May our Chief of the Defence Force, our Chief of the General Staff and all members of the Australian Defence Force rise above this tragedy and recommit themselves to training for the defence of our nation.
- C: Our country, Australia, has lost eighteen dedicated citizens, eighteen men who were prepared to make the supreme sacrifice for the good of our nation.
- A: May our Governor-General, our Prime Minister, our Ministers responsible for all aspects of defence and all those in authority lead the citizens of Australia to loyal patriotism and a commitment to a safe and peaceful nation.
- C: Father, your Son Jesus Christ taught us to pray:

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

FIRST READING:

A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah:

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

This is the Word of the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

C: Eternal God, as we remember those who died on the night of Wednesday 12th June, make us this day to remember the unseen cloud of witnesses who compass us about:

C Those who in every age and generation
witnessed to their faith in life and in death;
Those who by their courage and their sacrifice
won for us the freedom and the liberty we enjoy;
Those who served their brothers and sisters at the cost of pain,
of persecution and of death;
Those for whom all the trumpets sounded as they passed over to the other side;
Those whom we have loved and who have gone to be with you,
and whose names are written on our hearts.
Help us to walk worthily of those in whose unseen presence life is lived.

Help us to have in our lives:

All: Their courage in danger;
Their steadfastness in trial;
Their perseverance in difficulty;
Their loyalty when loyalty is costly;
Their love which nothing can change;
Their joy which nothing can take away.

C: So grant to us in your good time to share with them
the blessedness of your nearer presence,
that we also may come to that life,

All: Where all the questions are answered;
Where all the tears are wiped away;
Where we shall meet again, never to be separated from them,
those whom we have loved and lost awhile;
Where we shall be forever with our Lord.

C: So grant to us in this life never to forget those who have gone before,
so that in the life to come we may share their blessedness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **AMEN.**

HYMN: "The Lord's my Shepherd"

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN:

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

ADDRESS: The Commander of the 7th Brigade

PRAYER:

Our, Lord God, the Father of all people and all nations that dwell on the face of the earth, who sent your Son to break down the barriers between people and between nations, we pray you to protect us from the threats to our peace in every part of the world, and to bless all those who are working to build the foundations of true peace everywhere. Give wisdom to all our leaders and to all who lead and influence their fellows, so that we may break free from the bonds of fear and suspicion, and find the way to mutual service and community, through the following of the love of Christ, for His name's sake.

All: **AMEN.**

TIME OF REMEMBRANCE:

Introduction
Honour Roll
Laying of Wreaths
The Last Post
Two Minutes Silence
Rouse

PRAYER:

C: Lord God, today we have paused to acknowledge your place in our lives. We have been disturbed, distressed and dismayed by the deaths of fellow soldiers. We have honoured them for their courage, diligence and commitment in training. We have remembered them and prayed for their families, loved ones and workmates. Their sacrifice has touched our lives and we have been challenged to value those who are precious to us. We are aware of the bond which links us to one another in the military family and we thank you for friendships forged in training and deployment.

Lord, as we go forward from this time to carry on what others have begun, may your Holy Spirit continue to be with us through each circumstance; mundane and ordinary, exciting and challenging, painful and hurtful, frightening and fearful, hilarious and heart-warming. Give us a sense of your presence we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: **AMEN.**

HYMN: "Soldiers of Australia"

Kew Cottage Fires

When any person dies, trapped in a building on fire, it is indeed a tragedy. Even more distressing is when a number of people perish, some because they were prevented from escaping. We feel a sense of injustice when that hindrance is partly because they were children, aged, bed-ridden or disabled.

On the evening of 8th April 1996, fire broke out in residential cottages for mentally disabled men at Kew in suburban Melbourne; nine of them died.

Whilst criticism ultimately follows as to whether different or better provisions for their care may have prevented such a loss, nothing can diminish the pain and sense of loss of family members and their extended families, including those who cared for them daily in an institutional setting. With a sense of helplessness, the community at large feels some of that pain and sorrow, and needs the opportunity to be helped with their grief.

This service was conducted at the Anglican Cathedral of St. Paul, Melbourne, in the presence of Heads of Churches and State Officials.

Memorial Service

for those lost in the fires at
Kew Residential Services
on 8th April 1996

The Anglican Cathedral Church of St. Paul
Wednesday 17th April 1996

PROCESSION:

At 12 noon the congregation stands for the entry of Heads of Churches and officiating clergy.

INTROIT: *The Choir*

God be in my head,
And in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes,
And in my looking;
God be in my mouth,
And in my speaking;
God be in my heart,
And in my thinking;
God be at mine end,
And at my departing.

THE BIDDING:

The Precentor:

We welcome you to this service today in which we are brought together by misfortune and sadness. We remember those, whom we love, taken from us in the horrors of fire. We come here to deal with our feelings of love, sorrow, anger, bewilderment, looking for God in our questionings. We give thanks for those who cared for loved ones who are gone; for those who prevented this tragedy spreading further; and for those who support us in our grief; and we remember particularly the families of those who have died.

We come before God, confident in his unfailing love in all conditions of our life, and pray for his strength and support in the words our Saviour Christ has taught us:

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

HYMN: "The Lord's my Shepherd"

READING: *“No Man is an Island” read by a Staff Member of Kew Residential Services.*

The church is catholic, universal, as are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one another, and is one volume. ... No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were; as well as if a manor of thy friend’s or of thine own were: any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.
John Donne

THE CHOIR: *“Set me to a Seal”*

Set me as a seal upon your heart,
to a seal upon your arm.
Set me as a seal upon your heart.
For love is strong as death.

Many waters cannot quench love.
Neither can floods drown it.

Set me as a seal upon your heart,
to a seal upon your arm.
Set me as a seal upon your heart.
For love is strong as death.

*Words from Song of Solomon 8:6-7
Music written by John Leavitt (1963)*

THE FIRST LESSON: Romans 8:31-31, 37-39
*Read by the President of the Kew Cottages and St Nicholas
Hospital Parents’ Association*

HYMN: *“Morning has broken”*

THE SECOND LESSON: Matthew 18:10-14
Read by the Governor of Victoria

THE ANTHEM: *Sung by the Choir.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. No star is o’er the lake.
Its pale watch keeping.
The moon is half awake,
Through grey mist creeping. | 4. Heed not how hope believes
And fate disposes;
Shadow is round the leaves,
The long day closes. |
| 2. The last red leaves fall round
The porch of roses.
The clock hath ceased to sound.
The long day closes. | 5. The lighted windows dim
Are fading slowly.
The hearth that was so trim
Now quivers lowly. |
| 3. Sit by the silent hearth
In calm endeavour,
To count the sounds of mirth,
Now stilled for ever. | 6. Go to the dreamless bed
Where grief reposes.
Thy book of toil is read,
The long day closes. |

*Words: Henry F Chorley (1808-1872)
Music: Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)*

IN MEMORIAM:

A representative for each victim and a staff representative offer a candle in remembrance of the nine members of Kew Cottages who have died. A staff member offers a brief commemoration of each. The texts were prepared by the residents and staff and were printed on the order of service.

This begins:

In their own way, our guys were each wonderful and a joy. Our lives are more enriched for having known each of them, for who they were. ...

Following the commemorations:

These were not men the world forgot. These were men we shared our lives with everyday. Now that they are gone without the chance to say goodbye, a part of us is gone with them.

Friends, we love you, we miss you
and forever we will remember you.
Goodbye.

THE ADDRESS: The Dean of Melbourne

THE PRAYERS:

For the Departed: *A Former Chaplain, Key Residential Cottages*

Almighty and eternal God, you have given us life in all its fullness that through it we may know your love and compassion. We remember before you those who have been taken from us in so untimely and so tragic a way. We thank you for their love, their warmth, and for the joy we received through our knowing them. In your mercy, may they know eternal light and rest in your presence;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

For those who Mourn: *A Former Chaplain, Kew Residential Cottages*

Compassionate Lord, you suffered in the giving up of your dear Son to death for our sakes. Bless those families who suffer now in the loss of their own loved ones. Strengthen them with your love, sustain us all in our grief, and enable us to face life again in the sure knowledge that we are never alone but surrounded by your everlasting goodness;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

For those in Caring Roles: *A minister in a Kew parish*

Gracious God, your Son Jesus Christ brought good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed. We thank you for all those in caring professions, especially the staff and management of the Kew Cottages. May their work be the face of your presence to all those in their care;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

For those in Essential Services: *A Regional Director of Dept. of Human Services*

Lord God, you have endowed us with creative power and vibrant imaginations. We thank you for those who work within the essential services of our community, especially fire fighters and ambulance staff, devising ways to overcome the natural forces from which they protect us. We thank you for their quick minds, their keen sense of duty, and their care for all people; Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

People: Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers.
Grant that what we have asked in faith we may by your grace receive;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

HYMN: "Amazing Grace"

THE BLESSING: *The Archbishop of Melbourne*

Thredbo Slip Disaster

At 11.30 pm on Thursday 30th July 1997, a landslide occurred at the Alpine village of Thredbo in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales. As workers of the Skiing resort slept, the slide demolished the chalets in which they lived.

For days the site was excavated for bodies. On the Saturday, as television stations around the country suspended normal transmission to show continuous coverage, one survivor was plucked from the ruins, without critical injuries.

The death toll was 18 people who were well-known to the close-knit community, which was deeply affected by the disaster.

ABOUT THE SERVICES THAT WERE HELD

Pastor Grahame Abrahams of the Alpine parish of the Uniting Church in Australia writes:

“During the disaster there were four services at Thredbo, one at Perisher and one at Jindabyne. They were prepared ... (ecumenically - Catholic, Anglican, Uniting) so there were elements of each within the services.

For the first two services there are no orders of service. This is the service on the Friday and Saturday after the slip. We made these up as we went (literally) ... The Monday which was the National Service at Thredbo was attended by the Governor General and the politicians etc. This was the first order of service printed and was organised by the Catholic priest.

The Memorial service was the following Friday. I printed up the order of service... The order of service for the dedication of the memorial stone was put together by me (30th July 1998)”

(Where some of the materials for these services came from has not been recorded and remains unknown.)

“For the Anniversary weekend we found the company (ie. the local government) decided what services they wanted. They wanted to tell the people how and when to grieve, which caused a lot of pain. The village people asked us for a third service that the media didn’t know about, when they could dedicate their memorial. Word of mouth drew together about 300 people (the permanent population of the village was 200). It was done so well the media didn’t know.

This took place on 30th and 31st July 1998. Over that period we had:

30th July 1998

6.30 pm

Village Service and dedication of the memorial.

11.30 pm

A candle light vigil. This was kept low key. There were no formalities at all. We had candles available for people (5,000) but many brought their own. They came and they went as they needed to and looked down on the site and remembered. Many climbed down on the site and sat. This was the first time they had been allowed on the site so it was important for them. One group stood on a nearby balcony and sang ‘Amazing Grace’. They didn’t know the words but they sang it anyway.

We found it was important to be there but not to interfere.

31st July 1998

7.00 am

The time most had heard what had happened. This service was for village and families. It was advertised but the media were asked to keep their distance and that they could conduct interviews afterwards with the ministers. They respected this, to their credit.

3.00 pm

Official Memorial Service with all the dignitaries.

One camera was allowed in the church but all stations could receive the pictures equally. We excluded church dignitaries (bishops etc.) ... The only official guest was the Governor- General. Politicians who came did so as members of the public and sat in the congregation. (No seats were set aside for them. This took the political grandstanding out of the event.)”

Prayer Service for the Ecumenical Gathering*

Thredbo Chapel – 4th August 1997

OPENING HYMN: 'City of God' Dan Schutte

1. Awake from your slumber!
Arise from your sleep!
A new day is dawning for all those who weep.
The people in darkness have seen a great light.
The Lord of our longing has conquered the night.

Refrain: Let us build the city of God.
 May our tears be turned into dancing
 For the Lord of our Light and our Love,
 Has turned the night into day.

2. We are sons of the morning
We are daughters of the day.
The One who has loved us
has brightened our way.
The Lord of all kindness
has called us to be
a light for his people
to set their hearts free.

WELCOME:

INTRODUCTION:

HYMN: 'How can I keep from Singing'
 trad. Ed Gutfreund arrangement

1. My life goes on in endless song
above earth's lamentations.
I hear the real though far off hymn
that hails a new creation.

Refrain: No storm can shake my inmost calm
 while to that rock I'm clinging.
 Since love is Lord of heaven and earth,
 how can I keep from singing.

2. Through all the tumult and the strife
I hear the music ringing.
it sounds and echoes in my soul;
how can I keep from singing.

3. What though the tempest round me roar,
I hear the truth it liveth;
What though the darkness round me close,
songs in the dark it giveth.

And now let us welcome among us friends unseen,
living and dead,
relatives and friends, workmates,
people who have become the prayerful concern of our nation;
Some, no longer limited by the fragile form of humankind.
They will forever be where we are -
carried in our minds and hearts
As reverently we speak their names
may the breath we breathe
remind us that they and we will all live eternally.

OPENING PRAYER:

God of the living and the dead,
throughout time mountains have drawn your people
to wonder, reflect, to be refreshed and to celebrate life.
In our days the deep wound on the mountainside
here in our village has drawn us together.
Hearts have been broken,
but the great mystery of love, compassion,
and the capacity for tireless self-giving has been revealed.
Enfold us in your love today.
Enable us to listen deeply to you and to one another.
In the days ahead give us wisdom and understanding
because the scars of the mountain we will carry always.
May these scars help us remember that true love and life never end.
We ask this through your Son and our brother Jesus,
who once walked with friends pondering life and death
as they journeyed together to a village named Emmaus.

AMEN.

READINGS:

First Reading Wisdom 3:1-6, 9 (Read by the Governor General of Australia)

Responsorial Psalm Psalms 114: 5-6, 115: 10-11, 15-16. (Governor of NSW)

Response by All: I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living.

Second Reading Thessalonians 4: 13-18 John 3: 16 (rep. of Kosciusko Pty Ltd.)

Third Reading Luke 24: 13-16, 28-35 (Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn)

HOMILY: (Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn)

INTERCESSIONS: (Anglican Rector of Berridale)

HYMN: "An Irish Blessing"

May the road rise to meet you, and the wind be at your back,
and the Lord uphold you always in the hollow of his hand,
in the hollow of his hand.

Faith be yours, Hope be yours, Love be yours;
Peace be yours, Joy be yours, Strength be yours.
May God bless you, may he keep you forever in his hand.

FINAL PRAYER: Pastor, Uniting Church in Australia, Jindabyne.

BLESSING: Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn

FINAL HYMN: "How Great Thou Art" Stuart Hine

1. O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds thy hands have made.
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Refrain:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee;
How great thou art, how great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee;
How great thou art, how great thou art.

2. When through the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze;

Refrain:

3. When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
and there proclaim, my God, how great thou art.

Refrain:

* *The clergy who organised this service found it critical not to call it a Memorial Service because not all the bodies had been found at this stage. It was a Prayer Service. - the official service which dignitaries attended. When it was not given a name the Media called it a Memorial Service.*

Memorial Service

for those who lost their lives
at Thredbo on 30th July

8th August 1997

HYMN: "The Lord's My Shepherd"

REFLECTION:

ITEM: "I have carried you on Eagle's Wings"

Refrain:

I have carried you on eagles wings!
I will care for you in all your years!

1. My heart is full of peace;
you have been within my life!
Your guiding hand has always covered me!
I am full of confidence in You!
2. My soul is like a child,
cradled safe within your arms!
You have carried me across my years!
Leading me thru' sorrow and thru' joy!
3. Never need I be afraid!
No matter how uncertain things may be!
Sometimes thru' me, sometimes in spite of me
You seem to find Your purpose in my life.
4. I know failure in my life,
the weakness so central to my heart!
When I have strayed or fallen in my life,
You gently set me on my feet again!
5. You have bridged the flowing streams!
And moved aside the mountains tall!
You have kept me through the stormy past!
I know that You secure and guide me still!

FIRST READING: Isaiah 25: 6-9

RESPONSORIAL PSALM:

Psalm 129 (Led by a relative of the survivor and a victim)

- L. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading.
- P. Out of the depths, I cry to you, Lord.

L. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?
But with you is found forgiveness;
for this we revere you.

P. I hope in the Lord, I trust in His word.

L. My soul is waiting for the Lord,
I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord
more than watchman for daybreak.

P. I hope in the Lord, I trust in His word.

L. Because with the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption,
Israel indeed he will redeem
from all its iniquity.

P. I hope in the Lord, I trust in His word.

SECOND READING: Romans 14:7-12

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

P. Alleluia, alleluia!
This is the will of my Father, says the Lord, that all who believe
in the Son will have eternal life and I will raise them again
on the last day. Alleluia!

GOSPEL READING: John 14: 1-6

MESSAGE:

INTERCESSIONS:

MEDITATION:

LORD'S PRAYER:

CLOSING PRAYER:

FINAL HYMN: "Amazing Grace"

Dedication of the Memorial

for those who lost their lives
at Thredbo on 30th July 1997

30th July 1998

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord of our lives,
as we come together with a sense of common loss, draw us closer to each other in faith and love, that our fears may be dispelled, our loneliness eased and our hurt healed. Help us, O God, to emerge from this day, looking ahead with courage and hope and walking by faith in the light of your love through Christ, Our Risen Lord.

AMEN.

RESPONSIVE PSALM: Psalm 136: 1-9

- L. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
Give thanks to the God of gods.
- P. His love endures forever.
- L. Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
to him who alone does great wonders,
who by his understanding made the heavens,
who spread out the earth upon the waters,
who made the great lights -
the sun to govern the day,
the moon and stars to govern the night.
- P. His love endures forever.
His love endures forever.

HYMN:

Some days we have walked through the day on our own but many times just to get through the day has been an effort. On those days God has carried us on the wings of His Spirit.

“I have carried you on Eagle Wings”
(See words in previous liturgy.)

READINGS: Psalm 126
Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8, 11

MESSAGE:

SOLOIST:

TIME OF SHARING:

The journey of the last 12 months, the joys and the struggles.
(Particularly in the building of the hall and the erection of the memorial).

PRAYER:

Lord, we thank you for the gift of our friends
and the gift of friendship of our departed friends.

Lord as we move from here we go to honour their names.
Give us strength that we may live out our lives better people for having been
here in Thredbo both last year and now at this moment.
Our memories have become a treasure to us, but we pray You will help us to go
forward from this that we may build a better future for ourselves and all who
would come to this village.
Father we give you praise and thanks in Jesus' name.

AMEN.

BLESSING:

The peace of God, which passes all understanding
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God
and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord.
The blessing of God Almighty the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be upon you and remain with you always.

AMEN.

(The people move to the hall for the dedication.)

DEDICATION PRAYER:

O God, today brings us sad memories.
Sometimes we can forget - yet deep down the pain remains,
for you have given us tender hearts.

Even a glimpse of a place or a photograph,
the sound of a tune or a word,
and especially a day like this
can make us feel again the emptiness
which nothing on earth can fill.

We come to pay our respects and to dedicate this stone
in memory of those who died one year ago.
They were our friends, we shared the love of these mountains together.
We shared the frustration of living and working in an area such as this.
We shared joy and sorrow, and now our friends are gone.
We pray that they may know the joy of Your love each day.

May we not be overcome by our sorrow as those who have no hope.
Help us to face life with steadfast faith,
remembering that those who put their trust in You will know the joy of eternity.
Lord each day we get a twinge of pain as we look at the hill,
but Lord as the memory of those we cared for
is enshrined in this memorial we are dedicating in their honour,
let our pain turn to joy knowing they will never be forgotten.
Let this be a turning point in each of our lives.
Help us to honour their memories by the way we live and care for others;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

CLOSING:

We have dedicated this stone to the memory of those we loved and cared for,
and one more time we remember them by name.

(The names of each of the victims of the Slip is read, with the participating clergy taking turns to read one name. After each name is read the Chapel bell is rung once.)

A Memorial Service

Recognising the Anniversary Of the Thredbo Disaster

31st July 1998

PROCESSION OF CLERGY:

WELCOME:

OPENING PRAYER:

HYMN: "Strong and Constant

1. I will be Yahweh who walks with you!
You will be always within my hand!
Take your heart and give it all to Me!

Refrain:

Strong and constant is My love!
Strong and constant is My love!

2. Should you wander far away from Me,
I will search for you in every land!
Should you call, then you will truly know:

Refrain:

3. When you know sorrow within your life,
I will come! I will embrace your heart!
Through your pain you will discover Me!

Refrain:

PRAYERS:

READING Isaiah 41: 9-10; 13-14 (Governor General of Australia)

PSALM 121: "The Lord Our Protector"

I will look to the mountains;
where will my help come from?
My help will come from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
He will not let you fall;
your protector is always awake.
The protector of Israel
never dozes or sleeps.
The Lord will guard you;
he is by your side to protect you.
The sun will not hurt you during the day,
nor the moon during the night.

The Lord will protect you from all danger;
he will keep you safe.
He will protect you as you come and go
now and forever.

READING: Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 & 11

HYMN: "I have carried you on Eagle Wings" (*See above*)

THE GOSPEL: John 20: 19

SERMON:

PRAYER FOR THE FUTURE:

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

THE BLESSING:

SOLO:

HYMN: "How Great Thou Art"

PROCESSION: Led by the Clergy, the Governor General and his wife.

Bushfires

On Ash Wednesday, Wednesday 16th February 1983, some of the most devastating fires in recent decades occurred. In Victoria in the Dandenong area, around Mount Macedon and west of the Great Ocean Road, and in the Adelaide Hills and other parts of South Australia. Thirty four lives were lost, hundreds of homes and other buildings destroyed and massive property and stock losses were incurred.

For example in the area stretching between Framlingham, Terang and Timboon in Victoria, 85,000 hectares of prime dairy land were burnt: 11 lives were lost, 152 houses destroyed, 41 dairies and 8 shearing sheds and 35,000 cattle. 720 families were officially registered as affected in some way.

In the Mt. Macedon area of Victoria many lives were lost, whilst others were disfigured and maimed; over four hundred and seventy homes were destroyed, as well as shops, churches and community facilities being lost. (See "Ash Wednesday, Bush fires and the Church of the Resurrection" in Liebelt, Philip and Nicholls, Noel (ed.) *Gentle Rain on Parched Earth* JBCE, 1996)

“After the Fire”

Ash Wednesday Commemorative Service

16th February, 1984
Terang Uniting Church

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO THEME:

CALL TO WORSHIP:

HYMN: “Our God, our help in ages past”

PRAYERS OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION: *(Together)*

Most merciful God,
We humbly admit that we need your help.
We confess that we have wandered from your way;
we have done wrong,
and we have failed to do what is right.
You alone can save us.
Have mercy on us.
Wipe out our sins and teach us to forgive others.
Bring forth in us the fruit of the Spirit
that we may live as disciples of Christ.
This we ask in the name of Jesus our Saviour.

AMEN.

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS:

ANTHEM: “Great is Thy Faithfulness”

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Isaiah 6:1-8

HYMN: “Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways.”

NEW TESTAMENT READING: Romans 8:28, 35, 37-39

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:13-16

HYMN: “Morning has Broken”

ADDRESS:

ANTHEM:

A LITANY OF REMEMBRANCE AND HOPE:

Leader: Loving God,
our prayers today have been where our hearts and minds
have been this year
with the day of the fire
and all that has happened since.
We remember that day
when the foundation of our life was shaken
and there was grief that seemed too great to bear,
yet

People: Lord, in your mercy
we were upheld and saved.

Leader: We come before you, not alone
but in the company of others.

People: We share our gratitude with each other
and it becomes greater.

Leader: We share our troubles with each other
and they become smaller.

People: We share one another's griefs and burdens
and their weight becomes possible to bear.

Leader: We remember the tragedies:
the death of people we knew and loved,
the black wasteland of our countryside,
the fears of our children,
the grief and despair at the loss
of our homes, our herds, our hopes.

People: Lord, in your mercy,
comfort our sorrowing,
heal our memories,
let there be peace,
let there be hope.

Leader: We give thanks for those who fought the fire
and all who, with heroism,
stood beside us on that awful day.

We give thanks for the support and care
of our wider community, and state and nation;
for all that encouraged and sustained us
in those early days.

People: Lord, in your mercy
you gave faith in the ashes of disillusionment
strength to cope with the tasks of the day
and courage to face the uncertainties of the future.

Leader: We give thanks for everyone
who helped speed our recovery
respected our dignity
and restored our hope.

Those who worked amongst us from government
and voluntary groups, the church
and a host of friends, neighbours and generous citizens.

People: Lord, in your mercy
let the hope and the love
we were given
remain in our hearts.

Leader: We remember how we ourselves coped,
how despair sometimes gave way to anger
and guilt erupted in anger
and anxiety sapped our energy.

People: Lord, in your mercy,
lift us from despair and loss,
take all that happens to us
and turn it to good account
so that the fire of adversity
will deepen our trust
in your eternal providence.

Leader: We remember
the tears and the good humour
the tiredness and the comfort
the fellowship of suffering and community
and the way we were given
grace to hold on and to know
that weeping may endure for a night
but joy comes in the morning.

People: Lord, in your mercy
grant us serenity to accept what cannot be changed
and courage to do what we can.

Leader: We give thanks
for the regeneration of nature
the restoration of our lives
and the recovery of our hope.

People: Lord, in your mercy
continue to sustain and direct us.
Let there be peace.
Let there be hope.
Let there be love.

Leader: This we ask through the one
whose spirit inspires our compassion,
Jesus our Lord.

People: **AMEN.**

HYMN: “Immortal, invisible, God only wise.”

BENEDICTION:

Other Worship Resources for use after Bushfires

This collection was prepared by Rev Pam Wyley, now minister of The Uniting Church in Australia at Bright, Victoria. At the time of the Ash Wednesday fires, Pam was a local councillor in the Cockatoo area - east of Melbourne - which was particularly devastated by the fires.

THANKSGIVING:

People: We give you thanks for life, O God;

Leader: For the resilience of nature -
regrowth on blackened suffering trees;
New grass ... new hope;

People: We give you thanks for life, O God;

Leader: For the lives of all who reach out
and grasp our hands,
Offering their strength,
renewing our hope.

People: We give you thanks for life, O God;

Leader: For the strength and courage
we can draw from trusting you;

People: We give you thanks for renewal and recreation.

AMEN.

REMEMBERING: We called upon Your name.

Silent ,
Lifeless,
piles of rubble,
once a house standing solid
in the shelter of the mountain.
A home,
With life and laughter;
a pile of firewood standing by the door
ready to warm us through and through,
a dog's kennel standing in the yard;
A place for sheltering and belonging.
For home and family
we give you thanks;
for shelter and warmth
we give you thanks.
With frightening all consuming fury
the fire came,
servant turned master.
Without discrimination,
Ripping,
Roaring, devouring,
fed by gale force winds;
searing, scorching, life destroying;
seeking to become soul destroying.

In our fear, O God,
we called upon your name,
and you journeyed with us
as we fled.

Smoke billowing,
hanging, pausing, sweeping on;
permeating, filling nostrils,
imprinting memory with
choking fear.

In our fear, O God,
we called upon your name,
and you breathed your
breath into our lungs.

Watching, waiting,
fiery night time skies glowing
with colours of red and orange,
changing winds,
exploding cylinders;
giant fire crackers.
Shuddering, trembling crowds,
now silent,
now talking,
now crying,
now comforting each other.

In our devastation
we called upon your name
and your arms embraced us.

Chimney standing straight and tall;
refusing to give up its life
to the cruelty of the flames;
at its feet
the roof lies bent and twisted;
lamenting;
try as it would to stand,
it could not;
without support its life is gone;

In our powerlessness
we called upon your name,
O God;
and you stood with us
and mourned.

Kneeling among the ashes;
searching;
longing to find a coin,
a toy, a keepsake;
but the power which devoured its life
yields nothing;
knees blackened and scorched
we wept;

In our grief, O God;
we called upon your name
and you knelt with us
and wept.

You said come with me and rest
a while for I am gentle
and I will give you rest for your
weary souls ...

And we went
and we rested
your arms held us safe,
in you we found refuge.

RESURRECTION:

Re-awakening,
rebuilding, renewing life;
calling forth from the earth,
fresh shoots of grass,
burnt lifeless branches budding,
life struggling to reappear.

We praise your name,
Creator God.

Digging, hammering, sawing,
establishing and re-establishing;
in defiance of the elements
and their destruction;
Courage, strength, faith
and the will to go on
rise up and soar above despair;
Creator God,
your Spirit bears us up on
eagles' wings;
creating re-creating.

Community,
togetherness and camaraderie;
drawing strength from one another;
walking as neighbours;
sharing stories;
stories of hope;
stories of new life;
stories of resurrection.

Your faithfulness,
your steadfastness,
your belief in us, O God,
bears us up and carries us
when we would break
beneath the load.

Come Holy Spirit energise us
with your power;
Come Holy Spirit walk with us
and bring to life
our stories of hope.

HYMN: 'Darkness Into Light'
(Tune 87.87 Suggest Australian Hymn Book 148 'Love Divine')

Lead me gently,
Lead me firmly,
Through the darkness of my night;
Jesus, Saviour,
Walk beside me;
Turn my darkness into light.

In the pain of
Life's deep sorrows,
When I weep in deep despair;
Jesus, Saviour,
Still keep near me,
Hold me in your loving care.

When my heart seems
Like it's breaking,
When this life seems cruel and grey,
Jesus, Saviour,
Take my anguish,
Heal my breaking heart today.

Take my pain and
bring me healing,
Take my fear and give me peace,
Turn my sorrow
into laughter,
Grant me hope and joy and peace.

BLESSING OF SPECIAL OFFERING: BUSHFIRE RELIEF

We come in humility,
We come in gratitude;
We come giving thanks for all the gifts
you have showered on us;
We come offering to walk with those
who suffer in the wake of this fire.
Show us the way;
Bless the offering we bring,
So that those who are hurting
Know we truly care;
Through Jesus Christ,
giver of the greatest gift.

AMEN

PRAYER FOR HEALING:

Gracious and ever faithful God,
who through your son
knows what it is to be fully human,
Feel and hear the pain of your people;

Weep with us,
Lest our hearts break.

Gracious and ever loving God,
Reach out to us
as we reach out to you;

Befriend us,
Lest we feel alone.

Ever-present and nurturing God,
Surround your people
with a cocoon of warmth and care;
held with the softness of silk,
and the strength of strong twine.
Begin a gentle healing,
that from pain
may come new life.

Hold us safe
and nurture us,
Lest we shrivel up within.

Emerging slowly to new life
Fragile and tentative,
Faith tested,
faith nurtured,
hold your people, Loving God,
in the palm
of your healing hands.

Drench us in your love,
Bring us to new life,
with re-creating power ...
Through Jesus Christ
we pray ...

AMEN.

Each time you look at a fiery
sunset ... may the healing power
of the Holy Spirit ... gently
touch your tears and peace
and understanding ... until once
again you see the sunset for
its pure beauty ... and
the glory of God's creation.

SENDING OUT:

Go now to rebuild the life
God has given you.
Go with renewed strength;
Go with hope and confidence
That we will be the hands and feet
of Jesus Christ walking with you;
Go knowing that the Holy Spirit bears
you up and carries you where you
could not walk alone.

AMEN.

“My heart within me is appalled”

A Liturgy for a community in shock and grief after violence or accident

A liturgy incorporating “elements of a number of occasions when local churches have responded to community events by gathering people to lament, grieve and reclaim hope”, included in

How Liturgy cares for Us in Personal and Communal Settings

A Dissertation /Project presented to the Committee for Advanced Pastoral Studies,
San Francisco Theological Seminary, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Ministry.

Rev Colleen O’Reilly, 1996

Psalm 143:4b. The full text of v.4 is

*Therefore my spirit faints within me;
my heart within me is appalled.*

This text has been chosen to convey the sense of shock, disbelief, grief and outrage which sudden violence or loss of life causes for both individuals and whole communities, including a nation. O’Reilly, p.243

“My heart within me is appalled”

A Liturgy for a community in shock and grief after violence or accident

GATHERING: *(The Leader says these or similar words.)*

Friends, we have come together today to remember the terrible and tragic events which have happened in our community. Our hearts are appalled within us and we reach out to God and to each other.

We come to affirm that even in the midst of this tragedy we can continue as a community, supporting one another and rekindling our hope in the goodness of God’s gift of life together.

Separately we received the news of these events and separately the victims fell. In the silence of shock we heard the appalling news, and in our grief we do not know what to say, except to ask “Why?”

Together we will give voice to our lament, for silence will not heal us, nor will our silence lead to a renewed community.

Together now we are taking a step to heal and give testimony to our desire for a healed community. It is God who cares for us, who will bring us the healing and comfort we seek.

Let us now ask God for this gift.

HYMN ¹: Psalm 23 “The Lord is my Shepherd”

SCRIPTURE READINGS: *(These need to be chosen according to circumstance.)*

HOMILY:

The emphasis should remain on the healing of the community in the light of the events, and expressions of God’s engagement with us through God’s compassion and love.

PRAYERS:

Leader: Let us pray with confidence to God who heals the past, directs the present and calls us into the future.

We pray for this community of N.

Through the bond of our common humanity, draw us together and make us one.

People: Hear us, and heal us, O God.

Leader: We pray for all the communities of which we are a part, the neighbourhoods, families and friendships in which we share.

People: Hear us, and heal us, O God.

Leader: We acknowledge our lack of concern when these things have happened elsewhere.

People: Hear us, and heal us, O God.

Leader: Nurture in us a sense of the common good and a willingness to work for justice and peace.

People: Hear us, and heal us, O God.

Leader: Save us from anger and a desire for vengeance.
Do not let us keep silence when it is time to speak for change.

People: Hear us, and heal us, O God.

Leader: We pray for all who support and strengthen us;
uphold all who work in the support services of this community.

People: Hear us, and heal us, O God.

Leader: We pray for all victims of violence,
especially those who died or were injured here.

People: Hear us, and heal us, O God.

Leader: We pray for all who are grieving the loss of those they love.

People: Hear us, and heal us, O God.

Leader: We pray that you will restore our trust in the goodness of life together.
May our memorial to those who have died be our willingness to seek healing,
justice and peace in this community.

People: Hear us, and heal us, O God.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: ²

Our father,
Who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
Thy Kingdom come;

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us;

And lead us not in to temptation,
But deliver us from evil;
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
For ever and ever.

AMEN.

ACT OF RECLAIMING HOPE:

Leader: We cannot live and grow
when the memory of the past overwhelms us and keeps us in fear.
So now let us, God, who is goodness and love in our midst,
come before you to deliver us from anxiety and fear
and to give us hope in a new future together.

Let us pray for God's blessing
- upon this tree to be planted in this public place,
and upon these seeds
- we will take with us from here. ³

Let us reclaim this public space for our community, that once more
it may be a place of safety as we share life together here.

(A time of silence may be kept.)

Let us pray.

Holy God,
you know the deepest desires of our hearts before we ask,
and your will for us is that we should live in peace together.
Look with compassion on our broken and distressed community.
Heal the wounds of minds and bodies
and restore us to hope and trust.
Release us from fear of past events and deliver this place
from the power of evil and the memory of violence.
As this tree stands in our midst, plant in us a love of peace,
a love of each other, and a love of You.
Hallow this place and bless this tree and seeds that with them,
we may grow towards your image in us.
We ask this in your name and in your strength.

People: **AMEN.**

Leader: As a sign of the peace we seek,
let us greet one another in peace.

Please exchange a sign of peace with each other.

HYMN or other music/drama ⁴

DEPARTURE:

Leader: We have gathered together to remember the victims of
and to reclaim our life together in this community.
We go from here,
not forgetting what has occurred but with a renewed desire for all
that builds our life together.
As a sign of our willingness to nurture the tender shoots of new life,
we take these seeds to our homes for planting.
May God uphold us and restore us
and keep us from all harm.

May God have compassion on our community
and give us back trust and hope.

May God go before us, teaching us what is right
and may we walk the paths of peace.

May God bless you and strengthen you,
and send you out from here as bearers of peace.

People: We go in peace, we go in hope.

NOTES:

1. *Singing together early in the liturgy has the effect of creating an assembly of those who have gathered. Psalm 23, to the tune of Crimond, is a hymn with the virtue of being widely known by most people. Its familiarity is a significant contribution to this liturgy.*
2. *The form printed here is that most likely to be familiar to the largest number of people attending a liturgy of this type.*
3. *Each Order of Service will have a seed of the same type to be taken away and planted elsewhere by those attending.*
4. *Singing together is a good way to conclude but it is important that any tune chosen should be well known and the words simple and relevant to what has occurred in the community. It may be possible to have music provided by a local choir or ensemble group, or a dramatic interpretation of the community's experience. The guiding principle in choices for this liturgy should be the pastoral care of people who may have firm, feeble or no faith, yet have gathered in response to the mystery of suffering and are searching for authentic hope. It is important to do all that is possible to enable people to participate without feeling confused or inept in the situation.*

WORSHIP RESOURCES

FOR USE IN RESPONSE TO

**PERSONAL
TRAGEDIES**

The Value of Life

**The Annual Memorial Service
remembering workers who died
from occupational accidents and diseases**

Sunday 20th October 1996
St. George's Uniting Church in Australia
East St Kilda, Victoria

This service is sponsored by
the Victorian Council of Churches and the Victorian Trades Hall Council
and hosted by the St. George's Uniting Church, East St. Kilda.

APPROACH TO GOD:

Prelude:
Organ Voluntary
Trade Union Choir: "Nkosi Sikele Li Africa"

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Leader: The world belongs to God,

People: The earth and all its people.

L: How good and lovely it is

P: To live together in unity.

L: Love and faith come together,

P: Justice and peace join hands.

L: If the disciples of Jesus keep silent

P: These stones would shout aloud.

L: Open our lips, O God

P: And our mouths shall proclaim your praise.

HYMN: "Gracious God we come confessing"

WELCOME AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING: (Response: Psalm 50:15)

- L: O God, we praise you for your gift of creation,
for its majesty and awe.
We praise you for the integrity of the environment,
for its order and balance,
And we give heartfelt praise for life
that is gifted by your love
and sustained by your justice and peace.
- P: Call upon God in the day of trouble;
God will deliver you,
And you shall honour God.
- L: We offer our thanks for all who, by their work,
contribute to the common good.
Especially we give thanks for the lives of those workers
who died from work-related causes,
who died in serving us all.
- P: Call upon God in the day of trouble;
God will deliver you,
and you shall honour God.
- L: We thank you God for the compassion and support of family and friends,
and the solidarity of work-mates,
who have shown us love and friendship,
and have helped us to get up when we were knocked down.
- P: Call upon God in the day of trouble;
God will deliver you,
and you shall honour God.
- L: We thank you God for drawing us into communion with those who have died,
and for your Spirit which encourages us
to honour the lives of our loved ones.
Thank you for counsellors, support groups,
and all those who listen to the cries of our hearts.
- P: Call upon God in the day of trouble;
God will deliver you,
and you shall honour God.
- L: Thank you, God, for the many ways you bring comfort to broken hearts,
and solace to troubled minds.
We give thanks and praise that you never turn away
from the pain of those who mourn,
or forget our loneliness.
- P: Call upon God in the Day of trouble;
God will deliver you,
And you shall honour God.

CONFESSION:

(From Dorothy McRae-McMahon "Echoes of our Journey", JBCE)

L: O God, you die for us and conquer death for us.

P: But we find it hard to believe in your love.

(Silent Reflection)

L: We see your creativity in all the earth.

P: But fear to ask for our own healing.

(Silent Reflection)

L: We hear your invitation to peace.

P: But we dare not stop to receive it.
In case it is not possible.
Forgive us and bring us to faith.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

L: Hear the Word to us in Christ.
If we have faith as small as a mustard seed,
God's power is released in us.
Our healing is a gracious gift.
Rise, take up your bed and walk.

P: Thanks be to God.

AMEN.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD:**WORKPLACE DEATHS:**

An account of death through work related accidents and diseases.

TRADE UNION CHOIR: "Working Life"
"Bread and Roses"

FIRST READING: Exodus 33: 12-23

Moses is reminded by God that the glory of God is God's compassion for marginalised and oppressed people.

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 22: 15-23

Jesus avoids a trap set by the religious establishment which his life and teachings attacks as unjust and oppressive.

L: This is the word of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

SERMON:**RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD:**

HYMN: “The Lord’s My Shepherd”

MEMORIAL PROCESSION:

** The Victorian Trades Hall Council Memorial Book is carried in. A memorial candle is lit for all those who have died from occupational accidents or disease.*

** All are invited to light a memorial candle for a loved one or work-mate who died as a result of an occupational accident or disease.*

TRADE UNION CHOIR: “Solidarity Forever”

NEWS OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY:

OFFERTORY: Trade Union Choir “We will not give up the fight”

OFFERTORY PRAYER:

CREED: *(Together)*

We believe in God, creator of the world and of all people;
and in Jesus Christ, incarnate among us, who died and rose again;
and in the Holy Spirit, present with us to guide, strengthen, and comfort.

We rejoice in every sign of God’s kingdom:

- in the upholding of human dignity and community;
- in every expression of life, justice and reconciliation;
- in each act of self-giving on behalf of others;
- in the abundance of God’s gifts, entrusted to us that all may have enough;
- in all responsible use of the earth’s resources.

We commit ourselves individually and as a community to the way of Christ;

- to take up the cross;
 - to seek abundant life for all humanity;
 - to struggle for peace with justice and freedom;
 - to risk ourselves in faith, hope and love,
- praying that God’s kingdom may come.

(from a Social Justice Affirmation of the 15th World Methodist Council, Nairobi, Kenya, 1986)

HYMN: “Praise with Joy the World’s Creator”

Praise the Spirit sent among us,
Liberating truth from pride,
Making just what wealth and power
Economics don’t provide ...
Celebrate the Spirit’s treasure -
Righteousness none dare deride.

(Alterations to v.3 by Church and Trade Union Committee)

WORD OF MISSION:

BLESSING AND THREE-FOLD AMEN:

Suicides

Suicide Funerals – How can we approach them?

It is never appropriate to make assumptions. The family situation and the dynamics will not be fully revealed. While all the grief responses of anger, blame, guilt, regret and devastation may be expected, it is also possible that there may arise some sense of resolution, even relief, or pure resignation.

The deceased, in my experience, have come from various backgrounds and age-groupings. Common qualities or characteristics are not readily evident. Some seemed especially sensitive, caring, or had perfectionist tendencies. Often, the world was just not kind enough, and there was a dissatisfaction with society. It was common for the person to have had some experience of illness (physical or mental), with other stresses in their life.

Suicide is far more evident in the community in this generation (*perhaps partly because it is discussed more - some very public figures are known to have suicided, and when it happens it is not hushed up as much as it once was. It is possible that some high-profile suicides have been copied. - Ed.*). It seems to be seen as a viable option when faced with personal problems. Suicide can be seen as a way out or as a final statement made in a relationship breakdown.

Pastorally, it is always my intention to enable people to face their own personal feelings and struggles, and to validate their pain. It is always good to permit an openness about what has happened, and to guide mourners into ways of feeling less guilt and more healing. I avoid the use of the word “commit” in relation to the act of suicide, and encourage all to identify in some way with the deceased, who can be recognised to be one of us.

There is a growing need to seek stronger community supports, address alienation and promote an open vulnerability. As we do this we begin to recognise that we all want to work together to declare that life is precious and that hope can be rekindled even in despair.

Philip Christian is an ordained Baptist minister who works as a Celebrant (Funerals, Weddings and Namings), and in providing Family Support. He works in the Geelong area of Victoria.

The Funeral Directors, Ministers and Celebrants who shared generously of their experiences and resources concerning the (many) suicides with which they have been involved, agreed that there is no specific liturgy, litany or format which can be followed for a suicide service. Clearly each of us “borrow” lines, quotes or colloquialisms, sometimes, though not always, supported with music, in order to present the Gospel in a meaningful way if that is appropriate. We are trying to meet the needs of those in attendance, and shed light on the life of the person who is being remembered.

There seems to be a difference between city and rural expectations concerning the funerals. It became apparent that expressions of grief, even anguish, are a priority in the city, and are explored in some depth. In my experience, this is not the expectation of most country people. This raises the question of whether it’s an urban/rural attitude, a need perceived by Funeral Directors and met by the manner in which each Director manages or arranges services, or even whether the John 3:16 message has finally impacted and people feel more comfortable about funerals now. My inclination regarding our rural area, is a combination of all the above, cocooned in an acceptance that on the land, we live with birth and death juxtaposed all the time. That’s not to say the grief is any less in the country; it’s just dealt with differently.

As with any funeral, Celebrants have to discern what is and what is not appropriate, and address it accordingly. Careful listening at the time of meeting with the bereaved family and during pastoral care is imperative, especially regarding those things they want acknowledged. For Christian ministers and leaders, this is done prayerfully with the knowledge that the hand of the Holy Spirit is always near.

It was interesting that generally, families did not wish to hide the ‘darker’ aspects of the deceased. While many of the suicides were not entirely unexpected, those which were proved the most difficult for loved ones to come to terms with. Those of manic, schizophrenic or similar history, had quite often given voice to it in song or verse, which was a great vehicle for healing and release if it was read or performed at the funeral - especially if offered by someone close.

Similarly, one Funeral Director who is an ordained Celebrant commented that it has been prudent on occasion, to tell immediate next-of-kin, the precise nature of the suicide. For example, a mother asked what she could have done physically to have prevented her child (17) from hanging him/herself. She was told gently that it could have been prevented by her child at any given moment until the point of no return. He/she could have stood up with both feet on the floor and very simply and immediately short-circuited the suicide process. Instead, the child chose suffocation by hanging, in full knowledge that he/she could stand up, and start or stop it until the point of no return was reached. For the mother, that knowledge was the beginning of a very meaningful and healthy healing process, but it is not necessarily an effective pastoral approach for every suicide. (*Example used with permission.*) On occasions, it will be appropriate to include the details of the death to help mourners in their struggles.

Services vary in length depending on how much or how little families want, the amount of music requested, and whether tapes are played in full or part thereof. It might be a difficult learning curve for clergy, but there is a widespread belief that services conducted from a church need to be offered in more concise understandable language. Funeral Parlours or Chapels, even graveside services, are more comfortable, informal and less threatening than those offered in a Church. It is clear from listening to Funeral Directors in particular, that if this is not heard, funerals more and more will be allocated outside of the Church, as this is becoming a conscious choice made by people when they pre-pay their funeral, or families opt for an alternative.

Funerals are an ideal vehicle for gentle evangelism and teaching: to help people who might face their own mortality for the first time; to introduce the unchurched to God or reintroduce the lapsed; and to remind the comfortable. A director said to me ... "It's no good talking about God's infinite love and wisdom to someone, Christian or otherwise, when burying a child or baby or a suicided loved one. They want and they need to hear life like it is, comfort and hope, and they're not hearing it. The churches think they're offering it, but they're not. Make it relevant, personal and understandable."

A commonly held "concern" is the "Domino" or "Copycat" Syndrome, whereby young people especially, will choose suicide as a way out of a difficult life because peers or respected high profile public figures such as musicians, singers and film stars, have chosen this option. Young people need reassurance that the world generally, and their world in particular, is still a good place. Examples of this goodness (from nature or from the achievements of people they will identify with and admire/adore) can be given in a service and may encourage friends mourning a peer who has suicided to explore other options in response to the struggles they may be having in life.

Over and above any funeral, memorial or thanksgiving service in a church, funeral parlour or at the graveside, it may be appropriate and important to hold some form of group gathering at a place that was an important part of the deceased's life and where all or a significant number of the community in which the deceased lived will be suffering from the loss. The service will be an opportunity for individual mourning, the latter an opportunity for group mourning and healing. I speak of such places as schools, work places, nursing homes and retirement villages, sporting and other clubs. Depending on the age of the deceased, the circumstances of the death and the public knowledge of what happened, this can be very important if not essential for acquaintances of the deceased to deal and cope with the death. For example, even Primary School-aged children suicide; but so do those who are elderly. Such a gathering has importance even for deaths that are not suicides. It is usually valuable to spend some time at such gatherings giving opportunity for mourning peers to share personal stories and memories of the deceased. If the group is too large, this could be done in smaller groups. It may also be appropriate to do this at some funeral services. Individual counselling should be made available for any members of these groups, even if other resources or more qualified people need to be drawn upon.

For suicides, acknowledgment that everyone suffers is important. Confront this! Use words like the following, but not all in one hit!

hurt, angry, suffer, trial, "why", afraid, disbelief, unbelief, pain, pressure, alone, sorrow, lost, unfair, "where's God?", "what's-it-all-about?", struggle, frailty, confusion, regret, decision, mixed feelings

Temper these with words like:

relief, peace, thankful, reach out, understand, support, healing, share (sorrow, memories, question etc.), encouragement, care, love, remember, memories, resolution, future, life, dignity, renew, smile, see more clearly, challenge, no blame, forgiveness, acceptance

The use of music, poetry, literature or other artistic forms may be important. It needs to be recognised that Christian music and literature may sometimes be less appropriate than well-known meaningful secular music. Many who suicide are Baby-boomers or their children who have grown up with secular music as a dominant factor. Part of the care we offer a grieving family is to allow them to choose favourite music of the deceased or appropriate music that speaks of their life and struggles.

“Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness” - The Smashing Pumpkins

“Friends will be Friends” - Queen

“Summer Rain” - Tony O’Connor

“Soul to Squeeze” - Red Hot Chili Peppers

“Wish you were here” - Pink Floyd

“Stairway to Heaven” - Led Zepplin (also recorded by other artists)

“Only One Road” - Celine Dion

“Tears in Heaven” - Eric Clapton

“Purple Haze” - Jimmi Hendrix

“The Great Song of Indifference” - Bob Geldof

“Jailbreak” - AC DC

“Right Here waiting for You” - Richard Marx

“For the Good Times” - Perry Como

“Black Balloons” - Monster Magnet

Various pieces by Slim Dusty, Harry Seacombe, The Eagles, Welsh Choristers or Choirs, and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

See the resource list at the end of the liturgical resources for books that may provide appropriate material for us. Page 172.

Mrs Kaye Mitchell is a Lay Preacher in the Uniting Church in Australia, living at Camperdown, Victoria. Her specialist ministry is in conducting funerals, many of which are for families where the de-ceased are not Christian or are lapsed Church attendees, or who, for other reasons, do not desire a Church service. She is keen to ensure that the language of her services is simple, she explains the theological concepts in language that can be understood, and she offers hope and encouragement to those who are mourning. She also makes strong use of story, including Biblical stories, in her liturgies for the dead.

WHAT DO PEOPLE WANT TO HEAR?

(by a man, who had a brother and a niece take their own lives about ten years apart)

I think that people want to hear that our God is a gracious God who does not reject people who commit suicide. It is not an unforgivable sin. In many cases, including my brother and niece, it is the end result of a severe depressive illness. But people need to be reassured.

People need to be released from the feelings of guilt that are so common with suicide, the "if only" syndrome. "if only" they had done this or that.... "if only" we had been more persuasive or supportive

Both my niece and brother had made a previous attempt at suicide, so their depressive states had been identified, but that is not always so. Sometimes suicide comes out of the blue, but from my observation the guilt feelings are often still there. "if only" we had read the signs, it is obvious now why s/he did such-and-such, but being able to read the signs in retrospect does not mean that it was possible for them to be read before the event.

Sometimes the feeling of guilt will result from a person believing they are directly responsible for the suicide happening.

A grade-six child in my area did something he should not have done on his family farm whilst his parents were absent. His older brother, meaning no harm but to stress the gravity of his foolish action, said, 'Dad, will kill you for doing that!' The boy went out and did it himself!

My brother's widow would say that there is also an attitude that suicide is contagious, and people therefore avoid you. I was rather sceptical about this, thinking rather that people didn't know what to say. But she quoted an example of people planning to go as missionaries with a particular church and the family history being checked to ensure that there were no suicides and that "the family was stable." Whether people have this attitude, or whether they just don't know what to say, they need to hear words that will help them in their responses to and support of the family of the one who has suicided.

Extracts from Funeral Services for those who have Suicided

The following are extracted from a number of services conducted for people who have suicided, prepared and led by Philip Christian, a Baptist minister who works as a Celebrant in the Ocean Grove and Geelong areas of Victoria. No names are used and it is intended that neither the deceased nor their loved ones are identified.

Philip uses headings that indicate what he is trying to say and do at various points in the services, as well as the more traditional ones used in funeral services. These include, "Grief", "About Grief", "Responses in Grief", "Finding Purpose", "Explanation", "Struggles", "Gathering of our Grief and Questions", "Memories", "Anguish!!".

Reflecting the age and interests of the deceased, Philip frequently uses secular music that is the deceased's favourite and/or appropriate to the life of the deceased, not only to play but to establish themes for the service and explanation of the journey through life that has been taken.

It is also clear by appreciative letters from family members, that Philip spends a lot of time with the family in preparation for the service, getting to know them and the loved one they have tragically lost, and quickly becomes a close friend and confidant.

WELCOME / INTRODUCTION:

We are here today because NN has died. We have been jolted, shocked and shaken by his/her death.

Gathering in this way, we acknowledge the impact his/her death has upon us, alerting us to the fragility of life and the lack of certainty we have. In N's death we face the reality of our own mortality...

This is a time to find comfort and support, to be helped in a grief which threatens to overwhelm us. A time for expressing the feelings that have come to us in a new and forceful way.

We turn to each other, knowing that as fellow-mourners and as human beings, we are vulnerable to fears and struggles and anxieties.

Scott Peck wrote;

“Often the most loving thing we can do when a friend is in pain is to share the pain - to be there even when we have nothing to offer except our presence and even when being there is painful to ourselves.”

These words are so appropriate because they tell us that grief is handled better when it is shared, and that there are no easy ways, many unanswered questions and many mixed feelings. We will be aware of our regrets and disappointments, frustration, anger, bitterness and sorrow - all natural - emptiness, confusion, numbness. Yet there is also love, longing and appreciation for N.

We are here this afternoon because NN has died. And in his/her death there are many questions, feelings and influences upon our lives. We come here with our own struggles, confusion, and longings.

We want this to be a time to celebrate N's life, to address our fears, to commit him/her to rest and peace and find comfort and purpose for ourselves.

Your heads have been spinning with so many questions and thoughts. So many times we have heard these words “What if”, “What if this had been said or that ?”

But today above all we need to have a heavy load lifted off our backs; we do not need to beat ourselves about the head. ... It is so easy to get trapped into thinking ... “I should have done this” or “I should have done that.” And likewise all the things I should not have said or done ...

As N made a choice that shocked, stunned and dismayed us all, so we can make a choice: -

not to carry unnecessary guilt,
not to blame ourselves and others,
not to despair of our own life.

We can resolve to take each day as it comes as a gift, to discover something new and to offer what we have to others for their growth.

STRUGGLES:

In our time together this afternoon, it is important to be true to N, to remember him/her as s/he was and to be open with ourselves.

As our many emotions, which churn around within us need to be acknowledged and the path through grief, which is long and harsh, is to let yourself be yourself.

We have nothing to prove, except that we are wounded and in our woundedness we are in solidarity with others who mourn.

GATHERING OF OUR GRIEF AND QUESTIONS:

(In the form of a prayer.)

We do not understand what had happened. Or what is happening to us. All we know is that the world will never be the same.

We feel Frightened -
for our sense of security has been shattered. And our confidence shaken.

We feel Lost –
For we are tormented by countless questions.
“Why?”
“Why did it have to be this way?”
“What more could have been done?”

We feel Anxious -
We really don't know if we have got what it takes to get through this.
Can't we run, hide, pretend that all is well ?

We feel Angry -
Surely we don't deserve to be put in this position. We don't deserve to suffer like this.

We feel Tense -
hardened by the blows, the despair, the loss.

We feel Lonely -
Even surrounded by others, we feel cut off. And in it all we feel crippled by helplessness.

It has happened and there seems to be nothing we can do or say to make one speck of difference to this agony.

May we in acknowledging our pain, our fears, confusion, anxiety, helplessness, loneliness, feelings of regret and anger and bitterness, also begin to discover light and hope and peace, forgiveness and a sense of renewal.

In all the pain and questions of grief, let us find comfort, companionship, sympathy and strength and courage to continue.

AMEN.

FINDING PURPOSE:

For us to go on we need to address for ourselves the things that bother us. We focus on our memories and these can encourage us. We focus on our regrets and our resentments and learn to let go of those things which cannot help us.

We will never fully understand why N took that last step to end his/her life, but for our own health we need to forgive him/her and ourselves and others. We cannot bind ourselves up or torment ourselves with those nagging questions or "what if's".

And one thing we can do is to take from N's life the good and the beneficial; those aspects of his personality that our community, our world, needs, and to make them our own.

LIFE'S CHALLENGE:

Life is an adventure or it is not living.
There is risk in most things we do.
The risk of rejection.
The risk of being misunderstood.
So we weigh it up.
We make a decision based on it
it's meaning and importance to us.
We go in pursuit of our goals, hobbies, recreation
because of the benefits; but there are risks.
Nothing comes without a cost.
In the process, some things are lost.
What people make of us is only Perception.
One sees it one way.
Another has another perspective or slant.
In the end, it is only one opinion that counts - your own.
You have to have the courage to be,
Not to be moulded or pushed into another's ideal.

PRAYERS:

Help us, God, in this time when our feelings are on edge, when we are unsure and unsteady.

Help us to know when Jesus spoke of Your love for all people, He showed that love will never be withdrawn from N or from us.

You wrestled with questions of life and death in Gethsemane; help us to know that you do understand and that you are present where there is anguish of mind.

Would you bring to this gathering today
peace in our turmoil;
light in our darkness;
joy in our sorrow;
and the hope of a fuller life.

AMEN.

We come with clouded minds and mixed emotions. We come because we need to be here. For ourselves, for one another, for N. We are different, yet the same. We look for help, and for meaning and we want that things may be, may have been different. It is tough because we see our sense of helplessness. With the reality that confronts us, give us the resources not to mouth glib answers, not to be impervious, resistant, but to discover that N has found peace from turmoil, and relief from internal pain. And for us, help us to find another path through the dense undergrowth encroaching upon us, to a clearing, thence to resolve to live as free people, with value and hope and purpose. Help us to deliberately build that in one another.

AMEN.

Here today we cry out in our grief and pain.
We come with our fears and doubts and questions.
We are fearful for ourselves and for those we really care about.
Afraid of being lost and without hope or direction.
Lost in despair and a pain too great to bear.
Fear like panic overcomes us.
And we don't understand, nor do we know just where to turn,
in shock we stumble about.

This is why we cry out -
We scream within that it is 'not fair'.
That we don't deserve to suffer like this
And we want to close our eyes to shut it out.
When so many feelings wash over us,
When there is so much fear, anger, anxiety, regret and helplessness,
we look for a helping hand.

So that we may know we are not alone
and that we may find resources, anywhere,
in ourselves, in one another, in You -
To give us purpose for living.

AMEN.

A MESSAGE:

At Christmas time, Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus – Emmanuel - God with us. The baby grew and his wisdom guides many today.

It was He who told a story to show why God is there amongst, with, the non-church goers, the battlers, the people of doubtful reputation.

He spoke of a son who took off from home, cut off contact with his mum and dad and tried out all sorts of new experiences. But after a while it all turned sour and he decided to go back home. Why did he think to go back??

He knew deep down, that while he had rejected all that home represented, he himself had not been rejected. He knew that he could always go back.

The qualities of God which Jesus wanted us to see - compassion, understanding, forgiveness and acceptance - are all there.

He was lost - now he is found - is the gist of the story.

N knew this acceptance here -

As he goes back, back to his God, we believe that all is resolved. The pain is taken away; the confusion put to rest; the restlessness put to flight.

As his family did not turn their backs on him, so the God of Jesus is not one to turn from us in our need, for he understands our condition, our emotions, our struggles, and is there for us now in the future.

BLESSING:

Lord, support us by your grace,
Through all the hours of life's day
Until the shadows lengthen,
The busy world is hushed,
The fear of life is over,
And the evening comes.
Then, Lord, in your mercy,
grant us a safe lodging,
a holy rest, and peace at the last.

AMEN.

Service of Remembrance and Healing

The remembrance of lost loved ones is particularly difficult at times of joy when families are often together, such as birthdays, Christmas and anniversaries. A liturgy can be a healing experience for people at such times.

To assist those grieving loved ones, Lay Assistant, Jenny Stephens, used to conduct an annual Remembrance Service just before Christmas time in the church at which she ministered, the Uniting Church in Australia at the Victorian rural town of Derrinallum.

The following service is a combination of two of these services conducted in 1996 and 1997. She has used some material from an Alfred Hospital (Melbourne) service and from a publication by the Compassionate Sisters.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

As we celebrate this service together may we find space to remember, to grieve, to seek reconciliation with family and friends, to be comforted and to be healed, to find hope.

GATHERING PRAYER:

Loving God,
Each of us is here tonight
because we feel the need to recognise the loss of someone we love.
There is a gap that has been left in our lives.
Come close to us in our sorrow, we pray,
with the light and peace of your presence.

We come with many different feelings:
sadness and loneliness,
hurt or regret,
perhaps weariness, strength, anger,
relief, gratitude, hope, trust ...
Perhaps a renewed hope and vision for the future.
Any or all of these feelings may seem to overwhelm us at times.
And so we come together to support each other in prayer and song and ritual;
to remember our loved ones who have died or are lost to us.
Surround us with your healing love, Gracious God,
and in our most difficult moments,
hold us in the palm of your hand.

AMEN.

HYMN: "It Passeth Knowledge That Dear Love Of Thine"

'TEARS ARE THE PROOF OF LIFE'

"How long will the pain last?" a broken hearted mourner asked me.
"All the rest of your life", I had to answer truthfully.

We never quite forget, no matter how many years pass, we remember.
The loss of a loved one is like a major operation; part of us is removed
and we have a scar for the rest of our life.

This does not mean that the pain continues at the same intensity.
There is a short while, at first when we hardly believe it.
It is rather like when we have cut our hand, we see the blood flowing,
but the pain has not set in yet.
So when we are bereaved, there is a short while before the pain hits us.
But when it does, it is massive in its effect.
Grief is shattering!

Then the wound begins to heal. It is like going through a dark tunnel.
Occasionally we get glimpses of light at the end of the tunnel, and then
one day we emerge into the light. We are able to laugh, to care, to live.
The wound is healed, so to speak, the stitches are taken out,
and we feel whole again.

But not quite. The scar is still there and the scar tissue too. As the years go by, we manage. There are things to do, people to care for, tasks that call for full attention. But the pain is still there, not far below the surface. We see a face that looks familiar; hear a voice that has echoes; see a photograph in someone's album; see a landscape that once we saw together; and it is as though the wound were opening up again. But not so painfully. And mixed with joy too. Because remembering a happy time can bring back happiness with it and moderate our sorrow and sense of loss.

"How long will the pain last?" All the rest of your life. But the thing to remember is that not only the pain will last, but the blessed memories as well. Tears are the proof of life. The more love, the more tears. If this can be true, then how could we ever ask that the pain cease altogether? For the memory of love would go with it. The pain we pay is the price for the love.

Author unknown

PRAYER:

Leader Let us pray.

People Loving God, we thank you for the lives of those we come to remember today.

L. We thank you for the picture of your love which has been given to us in their lives and for all that they have meant to us.
Help us continually to entrust them to your loving care and peace.

P. Help us, Gracious God, to cherish with true thankfulness, those shared experiences which nothing can take away.
May the love we have known together, always shine in our hearts.

L. Give us the assurance of your constant care and increase our trust in you and love for family, friends and people everywhere.

P. God of peace, as we pray for ourselves we remember also the needs of others as we pray for our troubled and needy world;
that the horrors of injustice and war and suffering may be transformed by the powers of love, tolerance and co-operation.

L. Help us to live together in harmony and be reconciled when differences and hurts alienate or divide. We give thanks for all whose love and support has helped us in our difficult times.

P. God of Hope, give us grace to face the future with courage, hope and strength. In the midst of our grief keep us open to the possibilities you have for us.
Help us to value the precious gift of life and empower us to go out and live in love.

Together Loving God, free us to learn from the example of our loved ones, to follow the way they have shown us. And may we know your grace, mercy and peace in our lives, now and always.

AMEN.

Ian Millend, Chaplain, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne.

PSALM 121:

REFLECTION:

PRAYER:

O God, who travels with us in our life,
You know us so well and the burden we carry.
For some of us our burdens are too heavy and weigh us down-
seemingly too heavy to carry.
For others our burdens are the lighter burdens of memory -
sometimes sad - sometimes full of joy.
Stand by us gentle Christ as we lay these burdens before you.

AMEN.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES:

The candle is the sign of light, warmth and the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we light our candles may we see the light of your Spirit,
shining for us, lighting our way.
May we feel the warmth of the love of God for us.
May we be open for the power of the Spirit to work in us.

In lighting a candle, we also affirm that our loved one has been a source of light
in our life and now lives in the eternal light of God.

In silence let us sit and offer our thoughts to you, God,
as we remember someone dear to us who is no longer with us
and as we look for comfort in our remembering.

Following our time of silence, as music is playing, feel free to move forward and
light a candle from the Christ candle, in remembrance,
and in faith that God's healing Spirit can move in us.

(After silence and lighting of candles)

God says - I will never leave you nor forsake you even to the end of time. I will
walk with you down the pathways of death and lead you to eternal life.

HYMN: "Jesu lover of my soul" or "Brother, sister let me serve you"

BLESSING:

May the God of strength be with us, holding us in strong and gentle arms.
AMEN.

May the God of compassion be with us, holding us close
when we are weary, hurt and alone.

AMEN.

May Almighty God bless us, in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN.

The following were printed on the front and back of the service sheet, respectively.

When I am gone
fear not to say my name
nor speak of me in hush'd tones
as tho' it were a shame for one to die.

Let me figure in your daily walk
speak of my loves and hates ...
Remembering the laughter ...
And the tears ...

This way, I'll be forever in your memory.

Spirit of God be
within us to strengthen us
beyond us to draw us
over us to shelter us
beneath us to support us
before us to guide us
behind us to steady us
round about us to secure us.

AMEN.

'Carried from the womb to the grave' ¹

Liturgies for Late Miscarriage, Stillbirth or Early Neonatal Death ²

Rev Dr. Colleen O'Reilly

Pastoral Notes

The expectation that the processes of gestation and birth will result in a healthy baby is now deeply ingrained in modern culture, making the death of an expected child both less common and potentially more difficult for parents, families and friends to accept. Medical technology and modern medical practice are viewed as reliable deliverers of a successful outcome to conception. When a woman miscarries, or a baby is born dead, the loss is compounded by a sense of having been let down by those professionals whose task it is to prevent such occurrences. More significantly, a woman may feel let down by her own body, particularly if she has miscarried previously.

In our patriarchal society, a woman is still primarily defined functionally in terms of her ability to become a mother. When she fails to accomplish this, a woman may feel that her identity and personal worth are threatened (increased marital conflict and the development of psychiatric disorders in women are two possible outcomes of failing to deal adequately with the grief of these events). A woman may even feel herself to be perceived, not as a bearer of life, but of death.³ Particular care is needed to enable the parents to negotiate not achieving their anticipated purpose of a healthy baby in a culture given to acknowledging success and denying failure.

Feelings of bitter disappointment and anger are likely to arise. Women and their partners may even feel abandoned or 'punished' by God through these events. Guilt may arise from a sense of failing to have cared effectively for the expected baby, or from not fulfilling the hopes and expectations of others in the family. Grief may be suppressed because well-meaning family and friends urge denial of this loss on the basis that 'you are young enough to have another'. Further complex feelings are likely to arise, especially in the case of first time parents, from the ambiguity of being bereaved parents without ever having been parents.

This ambiguity of status may extend to the child who has died. The identity of the miscarried or stillborn child can be unclear. Is the stillborn a 'son' or 'daughter' capable of bearing a name? Such questions can only be resolved in talking with parents. The request for recognition of the life lost in some ritual form invariably comes at the initiative of parents or relatives, not pastors or chaplains, according to observers⁴. Often coming as a request for baptism, which can be conducted in an appropriate manner for a living but mortally ill child, such a request needs careful refusal when the child is already dead. (Those who are baptised in such circumstances and who subsequently live are to be brought to the church for public recognition of baptism.) Without canvassing the debate concerning the baptism of miscarried or stillborn children, it is possible to direct parents to appropriate ritual which does not compromise the integrity of the sacrament of baptism nor involve ritual dishonesty. A 'naming ceremony' can be used but may fail to acknowledge the reality of death and the subsequent grief that is experienced.

The rites that follow attempt to set the crisis of birth becoming death within a wider context of Christian hope and through ritual allows parents to acknowledge the bonds of love which have developed between them and this child and the reality that they must now let go of this child and the expectations and hopes of this birth. The rites seek to attend to relationships which are severed, changed and reformed. In naming the crisis, acknowledging the feelings, facing the ambiguity and reintegrating the relationships, the rite has the potential to move participants beyond the rawness and isolation of loss to the healing of body and spirit within the community of a broken yet being healed world. A recent study of parents of stillborn children found that the best outcomes of later mental health were achieved by “those who had been able to see and hold their child, and who conducted memorial practices.”⁵

NOTES:

1. Job 10:19b. Job questions God and states that he would rather that he had died before birth “before any eye had seen me, and were as though I had not been, carried from the womb to the grave.” (NRSV) Job’s phrase is a powerful evocation of the poignancy of pre- and neonatal loss.
The title is used in ‘How Liturgy cares for us in Personal and Communal Settings’, Rev Colleen O’Reilly, Doctoral Dissertation, 1996. These Pastoral Notes are edited from the service that follows, written by O’Reilly in her Dissertation.
2. This possibility is included for those situations where a baby lives only some hours following birth and has not been baptised. At that time, a requested baptism is the appropriate rite for a living baby. A rite used following a stillbirth or early neonatal death is not a substitute for a funeral, although it may meet that pastoral need if the parents do not attend any funeral held, as could be the case where the hospital makes the arrangements.
3. S Hunt “Pastoral Care and Miscarriage: A Ministry Long Neglected”, *Pastoral Psychology*, 32 (1984): 265-278, 271.
4. Elaine Ramshaw, “Ritual for Stillbirth: Exploring the Issues”, *Worship*, 62/6, (1988): 533-538, 536.
5. Penny Brabin, “Stillbirth: implications for subsequent parenting”, (PhD Dissertation), Monash University, 1995). See also “Learning to cope when a child is lost”, *The Sunday Age*, Melbourne, 29 October, 1995, Agenda, 9.

Rite for Late Miscarriage, Still Birth or Early Neonatal Death

(For use in hospital / home shortly after the loss of an expected child)

INTRODUCTION: ⁶

(The parents, celebrant, and significant others gather beside the body of the child, as appropriate.)

The Celebrant says:

God gives life yet here in our midst
life has been taken away.
N and N have waited patiently
for the birth of their baby,
they have prepared with great anticipation
for the birth of this child.

Yet we acknowledge that this new life
cannot now fulfill its expectation.
This little one who grew within N,
intimate and real, loved and welcomed
has become still
because death has taken him/her from us.

Sisters and brothers,
we face the awesome mystery of life and death.
In our anguish and distress
let us turn to our gracious and merciful God.

PRAYER: ⁷

Tender and compassionate God,
we mourn the passing of this child,
conceived in love yet born into death.
You see our tears, shed for one who is precious and loved,
yet taken from us.

We pray that you will be present in this place
and especially bring your comfort to N and N
in their time of darkness.

We cry out to you from the depths of our being:
why does joy end in sorrow?
why has the love of parents ended in such tragedy?

A time of silence may be observed.

Jesus says, "Come to me all who labour and are heavy-laden,
and I will give you rest,
for I am gently and lowly in heart
and you will find rest for your souls."

Risen Christ, we know that you come to us
in our sorrow and our pain,
for you have shared our common life
and known the grief of loss,
and the despair of death's presence.

Come now, Spirit of Healing Love,
sustain and comfort us whose hearts are heavy with grief,
for you alone uphold us at all times and in all places.
Blessed be God forever!

NAMING OF THE CHILD: ⁸

The Celebrant says:

God's love has been made known to us in Jesus Christ.
This love embraces all people
as a shepherd tends his flock
or as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.
God's love reaches even the smallest of his creatures.
Little children have a special place among God's people.
As we gather here today
we acknowledge that N and N's child,
though lost to them,
is received and gathered into the great family of God.
Therefore as one who is embraced by God's care
and is known to God,
this child will receive a name.

N and N, what name have you chosen for your child?

Parents:

NN

The Celebrant continues:

NN, you are precious in God's sight and are part of God's family.
We will always remember you
as God receives and gathers you into the kingdom.

The Celebrant may make a sign of the cross over the child.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN.

COMMENDATION: ⁹

The Celebrant says:

Let us now commend this child to God.
Let us pray:

God of mercy and love
we entrust NN to your care
in the name of Christ our Lord,
who died and rose again
that the power of death to destroy us
may be overcome for ever.

AMEN.

The parents may cover the child with a blanket or shawl, place the child in a casket, or some other action which signifies separation and farewell.

PRAYER FOR THE PARENTS (AND FAMILY): ¹⁰

God of grace and wisdom,
you have given us the gifts of family and friends.
Surround N and N (and their family) with your unfailing love,
give them a firm trust in your goodness,
and courage to meet the days to come.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

BLESSING:

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious unto you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.

AMEN.

NOTES:

6. The rite begins with a statement truthfully naming the situation, which is a critical experience of dislocation and distress. A cruel severing of the intimacy of mother and child has occurred. The parents and others stand on a painful threshold, gazing at the mystery of death when they had anticipated the joy of birth. Use of the word mystery is intended to move the parents beyond the boundaries of predictability and order, and invite them across the threshold to connect with the Creator of all life.
7. This prayer of lament gives form to the 'unspoken rawness' of feelings. Drawing on Bruegemann it implies the psalmist's cry of abandonment to question God while acknowledging that God has embraced our human condition, entering into human grief and human death. The prayer offers a movement from blame to acceptance through recognition of God's embrace of us in Jesus, Risen Christ, concluding with a petition to the Spirit whose presence sustains and heals, and a closing affirmation of God. The prayer anticipates and moves these parents towards new 'normality' by allowing for honest expression of both complaint against God and affirmation of God. See Walter Bruegemann, "The Formfulness of Grief", *Interpretation*, 31/3 (1977) 263-275.
8. The statement which opens this act of naming points to the need to acknowledge, give value to and affirm the identity of the dead child. It also sets the life of this child within the life of God and allows the parents to act parentally even as they relinquish the child who is now lost to them. I am informed that some clergy will conduct a baptism in these circumstances, out of pastoral consideration for the parents but, as noted earlier, baptism is reserved for the living. ... However this rite asks the parents to speak the name chosen for their child as an act of identification with the child even as they relinquish him/her to death. Naming is declared in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the child is signed with the cross, demonstrating the rite's intention of both claiming the child's place in God's redemptive love and releasing the child into God's unending care.
9. The commendation is based on the funeral rite and serves to mark the ritual point at which the child and the parents separate, the child being released into God's care. It forms a new threshold for the parents who must move forward in their lives, letting go of the crisis in which they find themselves. It is explicitly Christian with references to Christ's death and resurrection and draws this child into the redemptive work of Christ, a work with benefit for the whole creation. The rite provides opportunity for the parents to symbolise the separation by an act of covering the baby with a blanket, or other suitable gesture. Some may think this too painful. It's purpose is to enact the finality of the moment, the simple yet traumatic gesture serves to nurture the long term grieving and healing process.
10. As this prayer begins, it can be valuable to invite those present, by word or action, to hold hands. The gesture signifies that the parents, and others affected by this death are not alone, but a part of a wider human community which loves and grieves and finds life again. The prayer looks ahead, recognising that life is now changed irrevocably and that new reserves of love and strength are needed to move forward. The rite ends with a blessing of the parents and others present. The celebrant needs to exercise judgement about waiting in silence at the end, initiating conversation or withdrawing, leaving the parents to the care of the hospital staff or family / friends.

A service to follow the Birth of a Still-Born Child or the Death of a Newly-Born Child

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The English translation of the Lord's Prayer is that prepared by the English Language Liturgical Commission (ELLC) 1988.

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR MINISTERS

1. This pastoral service will usually take place as soon as possible after the birth has occurred; though in special circumstances some delay may be necessary. Preparation will normally include appropriate pastoral conversation. The need for privacy and quiet should be considered, but the most appropriate locale for the service is where the death has occurred. It should be clearly understood that this is not a funeral service and is necessarily brief. A quite separate funeral service will be held in due course.
2. Those present for the service, in addition to the parents, may include such people as: other family members as the parents desire, hospital staff, and an elder of the local congregation.
3. The parents should have the opportunity wherever possible to help prepare the child for the service, washing the child before dressing him/her, perhaps using clothing they have specially chosen beforehand, and using a special memento or cuddly toy purchased or given in anticipation of the birth. The parents may be encouraged to hold the child while the service is being conducted.
4. Where the family are related in some way to the church, this service should normally be conducted by the minister of their congregation. If a chaplain has been involved in ministering to the family in hospital, it would be appropriate for him/her to also share in the service in some way. Where it is not possible for the minister to be present, a chaplain may take responsibility for the service.

5. It is recommended that the following book be read and used as a basic resource by those involved in this ministry, and offered as a gift to bereaved parents and their families:

Stillbirth and Newborn Death, Peter Barr and Deborah de Wilde, Planet Press (1987)

Available from: Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, Camperdown NSW 2050

or Royal North Shore Hospital, St Leonards NSW 2065.

Further resources are listed at the end of this section.

6. This service should be preceded by appropriate pastoral conversation with the bereaved parents. This will enable them to be prepared for the service and may provide helpful pastoral information that can be incorporated into the service, especially at the point where extempore prayer is indicated.

From *Funeral Services and Resources* 1993, p. 40, which refers to a funeral liturgy, but is relevant to this service also:

Every death involves loss, shock and grief, but especially that of a child. When a baby dies near birth, however, distinctive factors come into play. These may need to be taken into account in pastoral care, including any funeral liturgy. Such factors include the following:

- a) *There may not have been time for the distinct 'character' of the baby to emerge, nor for memories to take form.*
- b) *There may be differences in the parents' perceptions, which need to be ministered to appropriately.*
- c) *Medical technology may have played a large part in trying to save or prolong the child's life. This may have helped parents to come to know the baby from the beginnings of pregnancy. Other parents may feel it has intruded into their relationship with the baby.*
- d) *Services such as these are usually small in attendance, but powerfully intimate. The text seeks to use intimate language, but without sensitivity such intimacy is easily damaged.*
- e) *The grief involved in this pastoral situation is distinctive, in that such early death seem to run against the Christian notion that life is a good gift of God, and given to be used in joy.*

The theological emphasis which underlies this service has as a major component the conviction that God is intimately involved in and through the pain of grief. The words and actions of Jesus in receiving young infants as members of the Kingdom of God are highly significant in this context.

7. Uniting Church practice, along with the practice of the church catholic, clearly indicates that it is inappropriate to do anything in this service which may suggest that it is a baptism. Therefore, water should not be used at any point. It may be necessary to speak in something like the following terms with parents who are requesting a baptismal service:

It is not the practice of the Uniting Church to baptise in situations such as this. God's love for, and acceptance of, your child does not depend on whether he/she is baptised. However, we do have a service which we believe you may find meaningful and helpful.

(See also Pastoral Notes in the above service, 'A Rite for Late Miscarriage, Stillbirth or Early Neonatal Death'.)

8. This service may also be used in the event of an early miscarriage, simply omitting Section 4 'The Sign of the Cross'.
9. It may be appropriate for the parents to be given a memento with readings and prayers from this service. The Commission on Liturgy has a card which can be purchased. If a candle and flowers are used in the service, they may also be given to the parents. (NOTE: In hospital settings, a candle may not be permitted. Always consult hospital staff first.)

A service to follow the Birth of a Still-Born Child or the Death of a Newly-Born Child

INTRODUCTION:

Attention should be given to the creation of a worship space. For example, a vase of flowers, cross and Bible may be provided. Where circumstances permit, a candle may be lit.

N refers to the name(s) of the child, where he/she has been named. If no name has been given, the alternative may be used.

The child may be held by the mother or father, or other appropriate person.

We gather here in grief and pain.
In this moment there is no understanding,
only the emptiness of sorrow and loss.

N / This little child has died
during birth (or, even before he/she was born).
We are overwhelmed by the mystery of life and death
that we have experienced in him/her.

Yet we remember, in our confusion and distress,
that the eternal God is here,
the One whose love is seen in Jesus Christ.
On the cross, Jesus bears our pain.
Through the cross, God shares our pain.
In the Spirit, God is with us
offering comfort, peace and love.

SCRIPTURE VERSES:

We cry out to God:
Psalm 13:1-2
Psalm 22:1-2

Some or all the following verses may be read:
Lamentations 3:22-23
Psalm 46:1
Matthew 11:28-29
Romans 8:35, 37-39

PRAYER:

*In this prayer, N and N refers to the names of the parents.
Where appropriate, the names of the other children in the family may also be included.*

Let us pray:

God of love,
we thank you for the assurance of your presence.
Help us to trust in the promises you have made.

Here extempore prayers may be offered.

Surround N and N, their family and friends,
with your love and grace.
Comfort them in their sorrow
and fill them with your peace.
Strengthen their faith in you
and bless them with confidence and courage
to face the future,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS:

Here N refers to the name of the child. If there is no name the alternatives may be used.

The minister places the sign of the cross on the child. The parents may be given the opportunity, if desired, to each share in placing the sign of the cross on their child.

During the prayer ("God of compassion ..."), it is appropriate for the minister to place a hand upon the child.

God says: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.

Jeremiah 1:5

And we remember that Jesus welcomed little children, took them in his arms,
and blessed them.

Luke 18: 15-17

For N / all, he lived.
For N / all, he died.
For N / all, he rose again.
He has welcomed N / this child
into his eternal kingdom.

Therefore, as a mark of that love and grace,
we place on him/her the sign of the cross.
Let us pray:

God of compassion,
help us to believe
that N / this child,
a lamb of your flock,
is in your care
through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven;
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and forever.

AMEN.

BLESSING:

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;

Based on Philippians 4:7

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.

AMEN.

OR

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious unto you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

As the service concludes, the parents may continue to hold the child, as may others invited to do so by them. There may be expressions of grief and farewells before the child is handed into the care of a member of the hospital staff or other suitable person.

OTHER RESOURCES

Funeral Services and Resources 1993, published under the imprint Broughton Books by E.J. Dwyer (Australia) Pty Ltd and prepared by the Liturgical Commission of the Anglican Church, pp. 40-50.

When the Dream is Shattered, Judith and Michael Murray, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide (1988).

Loss of a Baby, Margaret Nicol, Bantam Books (1989)

Parents could also be referred to **SANDS** (A volunteer self help for families and individuals who have experienced death of a baby before, during or after birth). It has branches in each state of Australia and offers hospital and home visits; a library of books, articles, videos and tapes; telephone support; newsletters and support meetings.

For the young who are gone, but never forgotten,

A Memorial Service*

A non-denominational Service
held at MacQueen's Funeral Parlour
Camperdown, Victoria
on March 28th 1999.

Prepared by Mrs. Kaye Mitchell, a Lay Preacher
in the Uniting Church of Australia,
and Don MacQueen, Funeral Director.

INTRODUCTION and WELCOME:

OPENING PRAYER:

Loving Lord, whose breath gives life to the world and whose voice is heard on the breeze, we recognise that all of creation is Yours, held together in Jesus the Christ, and that we are a strand in the web of life weaved by you.

When the field was ploughed there was an expectation of harvest. The harvest for the lives we shared and carried has been gathered in, yet life has been sustained. God who calls winds from the skies bringing gentle rain to fall on parched earth, grant peace to the sun of our children as it goes down, and the quiet awakening to a breathless dawn. Calm our hearts that You might find rest there, and Your peace might cover us.

Grant us the grace to relive and share the memories of those little people with their own little spirit whom we knew and loved, and to be thankful; for the time we had together.

We name the precious moments:
the nervous thrill and preparation for becoming a parent;
the joy of friends, family and others;
kind people, kind words or a kind touch;
the fact that there was a child who did exist, but briefly,
and the many ways in which he or she is still part of us,

and we remember our special moments ...

We also name the hurts:
the incomparable shock, horror and immense sorrow
at knowing the loss of heartbeat or death of our child;
the disbelief – it's someone else - not me, not my child;
the hurt of feeling isolated or alone, with perhaps even a sense of failure;
well-meaning but unthinking insensitivity -
“you're young, you can have another one,”
“you have other healthy children,”
“you'll get over it.”

Friends who wouldn't speak about it or let us speak about it,
as if our child never was;
being afraid to ask questions for fear of what others might think;
the hurt of family gatherings where our baby was missing;
the reminders of birthdays, or the day the baby was due,
or Fathers' or Mothers' Day;
Fathers who may have been “left out”;
the hurt of searching for our baby in the face or faces of other babies.

Loving Lord, we have suffered the loss of our children;
the death of a dream and the hope for that dream.
We bring to You our unfinished business
- the times we failed or felt someone failed us;
regrets about things we wish we'd said or done
or, perhaps hadn't said or done.
Together, might we put these and other thoughts to rest,
break the bonds and let go.

Grant us the serenity to accept those things which cannot be changed;
the courage to change the things we can; and above all
the wisdom to know the difference.
In Jesus' Name.

AMEN.

VERSE: Lord Byron's epic, “Don Juan to beautiful Haidee”
who died before their child could be born.

Don Juan speaks:

She died but not alone.
She held within her a second principle of life
which might have dawned a fair and sinless child of sin,
but closed its little being without light,
and went down to the grave unborn,
wherein blossom and bough be withered with one blight.

REFLECTION: Elizabeth Gaskell, July 4th 1836

I made a vow within my soul, O child,
when thou wert laid beside my weary heart -
with marks of death on every tender part,
that if in time a living infant smiled,
winning my ear with gentle sounds of love,
in sunshine of such joy,
I still would save a green rest for thy memory, O dove,
and of times visit thy small nameless grave.
Thee have I not forgot,
my first-born thou,
whose eyes never opened to my wistful gaze.
whose suffering stamped with pain thy little brow.
I think of thee in these far happier days,
and thou, my child, from thy bright heaven see
how well, I keep my faithful vow to me.

A QUIET TIME and ITEM:

“Turn, Turn, Turn” by the Seekers
Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8, 11 & 14 adapted by Pete Seeger.

The words of the passage from Ecclesiastes were printed on the service sheet so people could follow as they listened to the song.

- ¹ For everything there is a season
and a time for every purpose under heaven:
- ² a time to be born and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to uproot;
- ³ a time to kill and a time to heal;
a time to pull down and a time to build up;
- ⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh;
a time for mourning and a time for dancing;
- ⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them;
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
- ⁶ a time to seek and a time to lose;
a time to keep and a time to throw away;
- ⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend;
a time for silence and a time for speech;
- ⁸ a time for love and a time for hate;
a time for war and a time for peace.
- ¹¹ God has made everything to suit its time;
moreover he has given us a sense of time
past and future, but no understanding
of His work from beginning to end.
- ¹⁴ Whatever is has been already,
and whatever is to come has been already,
and God summons each event back to its turn.

AMEN.

READING: John 14: 1-6, 18, 19, 27

MEDITATION:

I can't answer the question "Why?" "Why us, why this child?" if there's an answer, it's probably "I don't know". But I do know that God showed Himself through the hearts and hands of any one person who offered you love and support and outreach at that time. Bette Midler sings a song about God watching us from a distance, but it's not like that. God goes right through all those hurts - the grief, the loss, the immense sorrow, the loneliness and any other word you care to name - with us, and walks beside us.

In "Tears in Heaven", Eric Clapton asks the question "Would you know my name, if I saw you in heaven?" and I think the answer to that is "Yes". His next question is "Would it be the same?" and I think the answer to that is "No". This week, the Christian calendar celebrates Easter, and all of the world, Christian or non-Christian, recognises that celebration, even if it doesn't follow it. Easter teaches that the Resurrected Jesus appeared to people who saw Him die by crucifixion. When He appeared, he was different, but everyone who saw Him, knew Him. Read about it in John's Gospel in the Bible, meanwhile you must make up your own mind about that.

"Would you know my name, if I saw you in heaven?" Yes. "Would it be the same?" I don't think so, for I believe these babies have been carried by God, to a new, safe, more gracious and gentle pasture.

AMEN.

JEWISH PRAYER: The Gates of Prayer

- In the rising of the sun and in the going down.
R We remember them all.
- In the blowing of the wind, and in the chill of winter.
R We remember them all.
- In the opening of buds and in the warmth of summer.
R We remember them all.
- In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn.
R We remember them all.
- In the beginning of the year and when it ends.
R We remember them all.
- When we are weary and in need of strength.
R We remember them all.
- When we are lost and sick in heart.
R We remember them all.
- When we have joys we long to share.
R We remember them all.
- So long as we live, they too shall live.
For they are still part of us.
R As we remember them all.

A QUIET TIME with MUSIC: “Waterlily” Priscilla Herdman

LIGHTING OF CANDLES: to symbolise “letting go”

READING OF NAMES:

SONG: “Morning has Broken”

BLESSING:

* See also “Exorcising Trauma” in the Articles section of these Liturgical Resources, which refers to this service.

OTHER WORSHIP RESOURCES

Lord,
I remember when I began to suspect I was pregnant.
Only you and I knew.
I recall those feelings of joy and expectation.
I remember the day the pregnancy was confirmed,
and the excitement of telling other members of the family.
And then I remember the signs that something was wrong,
 pain, bleeding, more pain and more bleeding.
It was not the productive pain of child birth;
it seemed to hurt more because I knew I was losing the baby.
Then came the doctors' explanations ...
 blighted ovum, ectopic pregnancy, incompetent cervix,
 You'll need a D. & C..
The reason didn't make it easier.
I recall the well-meaning comments ...
 Nature's way,
 must have been something wrong,
 try again soon.

Lord I offer you
those memories,
 those feelings,
 those unfulfilled expectations,
 those unanswered questions. Why? and What if?
 those unspoken accusations of fault and feelings of guilt and anger.

But Lord, most importantly
I offer you the pain and sadness and tears.
For I admit to you that I really wanted to have this baby.
Give me the courage to grieve,
 but then to move on from here.

And Lord, in the future,
 when the due date comes around,
 and other women are delivering babies,
 and holding them to their breasts,
 help me to remember this little one
 who was growing within me for a time,
 and help me to be thankful for the privilege that was mine,
 to conceive, to nurture, to love and to let go.

AMEN.

Rev Kaye Ronalds, from the parish of Capricorn Coast, Queensland, of The Uniting Church in Australia, wrote the prayer above after experiencing two difficult kinds of pregnancy loss. It has been used at the Mater Hospital in Brisbane to assist patients grieving over pregnancy loss. At the hospital the Mater Mothers hold a memorial service and parents light candles floating on water. It could be used as part of a liturgy of remembering such as a memorial service or it can be used simply by the parents or mother who needs some words to frame her thoughts.

"I wrote it in 1992. I believe God gave it to me as part of my healing."

Lord God, we pray for N's family,
partner, parents, children, brothers and sisters.

Comfort them in their sadness,
soothe them in their anger,
walk with them through their depression,
heal them through their grief.

We pray for workmates and friends,
many of whom will be just as shocked as we are.

We pray for people in the unit/ company/ institution/ community who are dismayed,
bewildered, angry.
We pray for others on the scene at the time NN, NNN and NNNN.

We pray for those who came quickly to help ...
medics, police and fire brigade.

We pray for those who will be involved in the investigations,
that they may be diligent and thorough,
and for those who will provide counselling support,
that as they listen to the stories they bear the pain.

Forgive anything which we may have missed or wish we had said.
Help us to accept the inadequacy of the word 'accident'.

Assist us, Lord, to feel, to grieve, to accept and then to 'carry on',
through the power of the Holy Spirit,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

This prayer, also written by Rev Kaye Ronalds, was used during a Church service held within an Army Reserve Unit the day after a young female soldier was accidentally shot and killed on 19th September, 1994.

It has been rewritten to remove references to people involved so that it may be useful in any accident situation, and could be further altered to fit such situations.

In May 1996, when minister at Camperdown (Vic.) Uniting Church in Australia, Rev Rob Gotch, was returning from a retreat in Ballarat, that was for ordained people in their exit appointment. Rob writes:

“The retreat provided a significant opportunity for me to reflect upon the joy and pain of church relationships. ... As I drove through the bush land near Enfield I was struck by the colours of black and green. After a bushfire in the area some 2 years before, the blackness was now covered with new life. I drove on and upon arriving home, penned the following poem, in which the themes of the retreat and the bushfire came together. The poem is a litany on the fire and yet I prefer to call it –

A Parable of the Church

Crimson smoke in the night sky -
a beautiful picture of fear.
The animals run,
but the trees, oh ... the trees -
rooted to the spot, frozen to the ground
which nurtures, tied to their place of birth.

Death approaches innocence. Pain!
Terrible, withering, relentless pain
distorts and chars, maims and blackens.
The pain passes as quickly as it came,
but the heat lingers for eternity, and
the injured soul retreats into oblivion.
But even eternity is not forever.
The soul remembers the colour of green and
the movement of limbs - life in all its fullness.
The soul probes the charred
and blackened parts looking for signs.

Futility longing for fertility, the soul finds
power not in itself but in the very ground
that held it for death. Life flows, and
death itself must retreat for a time. Limbs
stretch out green, tentatively at first for
fear of heat, to absorb warmth and to sing
the song of life with other souls.

Together they stand, in the same ground,
under the same sun, souls sharing purpose
and destiny. Once more a canopy of grace,
once more a panoply of life.

*Rev Rob Gotch
Ascot Vale Uniting Church in Australia, Victoria*

Our community is shaken ...

Come quickly, Lord God, and help us;
calm the storm in our lives.
A savage wind has stripped the tree bare,
and strains at its roots in the earth.
Our community is shaken and shattered,
our vision of life together snatched away.

Come quickly, Lord God, and help us,
as you have always helped those who call out to you.
Open up a way for us;
restore our hope in you and our trust in each other.
Let your mighty hand dispel the dark cloud
in which we are lost;
and gently lead us toward your hope and life
for all the world.

Inspired by Isaiah 51:9-11. Rev Jeff Shrowder, Merbein Uniting Church, Victoria

Two Prayers from a Funeral for a Still-Born Baby

Loving Lord, we burn a palm-leaf cross to recognise that like little N, we are but dust and to dust we shall return, for from the moment of conception we are born to die.

Believers are a people of the Resurrection - our life and hope is vested in Christ the Lord.

We have been through birth and death, and fire and ashes, with a deep sense of remembering. Ash is the remnant of something burned, but it is also a fertiliser of the Earth. Out of the ashes new life springs forth as a burst of vitality, a defiance after even the greatest disaster.

Our journey through life can bring both a wilderness in which we become lost and afraid, experiencing pain, despair and disappointment, or the discovery of a fertile desert offering surprise, joy, love and laughter. We need to enter and experience both to really encompass life. The path can be a long one, strewn with mistakes, tentative steps, injustices and the cries - not only of anguish, but also of love, compassion and exultation. Along this path we can look back, stumble, and even be on the point of turning back; or we can take up the challenge of sharing this road with others; perhaps changing direction, allowing ourselves to discover the joy of that fertile desert which Christians call God.

AMEN.

Commendation

Loving Lord, we offer thanks for the privilege and pleasure you granted each of us, through the birth of this child, NNN, and for the many joys he/she leaves with us. We also offer you our sadness, as we return N to you, a little flower just lent, not given; to bud on earth and bloom in heaven. Mindful of your gift of eternal life and confident in the love you have for all, we commend N to your care, in the Name of Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever.

AMEN.

Mrs Kaye Mitchell, Camperdown (Victoria), who is a Lay Preacher of the Uniting Church in Australia with a specialist ministry in leading funerals.

Litany of Comfort

“Bringing our pain to the cross”

Voice 1: I’m tired and discouraged.

Voice 2: I’m hurt and despairing.

Voice 3: Nobody understands.

Group 1: Don’t you know?

Group 2: Haven’t you heard?

Leader: Those who trust in God for help will find their strength renewed.

Sung Response: “O Lord, hear my prayer” (Taize)

Voice 1: I’m worried and afraid.

Voice 2: I’m weary and disillusioned.

Voice 3: Nobody listens.

Group 1: Don’t you know?

Group 2: Haven’t you heard?

Leader: Those who trust in God for help will find their strength renewed.

Sung response: “O Lord, hear my prayer....” (Taize)

Voice 1: I’m sad and lonely.

Voice 2: I’m bruised and battered.

Voice 3: Nobody cares.

Group 1: Don’t you know?

Group 2: Haven’t you heard?

Leader: Those who trust in God for help will find their strength renewed.

Sung Response: “O Lord , hear my prayer” (Taize)

All: They will rise on wings like eagles;

they will run and not get weary;

they will walk and not grow weak.

Leader: This is the word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Based on Isaiah 40: 21-31.

Prayers of the People

*"Behold they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost;
we are clean cut off.'"* *Ezekiel 37:11*

- L. God of hope
we bring before you
those whose lives are dried up.
- We pray for those dried up
by disappointment
by bitterness
by failure
by physical exhaustion ...
- We pray for those dried up
by grief
by guilt
by anger
by despair ...
- R. Come from the four winds,
O breath of God,
and breathe upon these
that they may live anew.
- L. God of hope,
we bring before you
those whose hope is lost:
- We pray for people
persecuted
violated
left for dead...
- We pray for people
bewildered
disillusioned
apathetic ...
- R. Come from the four winds,
O breath of God,
and breathe upon these
that they may live anew.
- L. God of hope
we bring before you
those who feel themselves cut off.
- We pray for those cut off
by age
by disability
by poverty
by thoughtlessness...

- L. We pray for those cut off
from family
from neighbours
from their home
from God ...
- R. Come from the four winds,
O breath of God,
and breathe upon these
that they may live anew.
- L. God of hope
we thank you for the promise
of restoration
of a new day
and a new life:
- R. Thanks be to God
Creator
Saviour
Spirit.

AMEN.

These two prayers were originally included in 'Ideas for Worship', JBCE, Melbourne, 1994, and were used in 'New Life from Drought', Philip Liebelt & Noel Nicholls (ed.) 'Gentle Rain on Parched Earth' JBCE, Melbourne, 1996, p.24. Used with permission.

A Prayer of Thanksgiving used during a Time of Flood

God our Father, we give thanks for the people of N., who have shared, supported and worked together as one family in the midst of disaster; for all of them,

We praise and thank you, O Lord.

For the careful planning, quick thinking and courageous action that preserved life in N. and for the gift of life itself,

We praise and thank you, O Lord.

For the variety of skills and services that were given and employed to bring about order in the midst of flooded chaos, for all Emergency Workers, the Council, Police, S.E.S., Telstra, and the hospital; for the gifts and skills of these people,

We praise and thank you, O Lord.

For the warmth and generosity of townspeople and fellow Australians in country and city centres who have poured into this area their time, money and resources to re-establish homes and businesses. For the gift of love and generosity,

We praise and thank you, O Lord.

For Government - local, state and commonwealth - who have not forgotten to care for people in need. For all of those in positions of power and authority,

We praise and thank you, O Lord.

For our standing Military Forces, in particular our Army, marshalled in N. in response to the needs of the people of the land; for the goodwill, the cheerfulness and thoughtfulness in service,

We give praise and thanks, O Lord.

For technology and communication which warned the town and prevented greater disaster; which kept it in touch with the world outside of N. and opened the way for outside help and assistance,

We give praise and thanks, O Lord.

Most of all, we give thanks for the safety and care of our children and families in this perilous time.

For love and peace in our homes, our town and in our nation, we thank you, God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

*Fr. Lindsay Howie, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Keppel, Queensland. This prayer originally appeared in Philip Liebelt and Noel Nicholls (ed.) **Gentle Rain on Parched Earth**. JBCE, Melbourne, 1996 Used with permission.*

ARTICLES

Preparing a Liturgy in Response to a Disaster

No two disasters or personal tragedies are completely alike. Similarly responses to such events made by the Church and individuals, seeking to offer pastoral ministry, will need to be different. They must be relevant to the needs of the people involved and affected. Therefore any suggestions made on preparing a liturgy in response to these, must be considered carefully. There is no form liturgy that can be made to fit each situation. Clearly, the better one knows the deceased and/or his/her family, the better one is equipped to conduct the funeral. Similarly, those who know a community, the details of a disaster and the impact of the latter on the former, are best equipped to prepare a liturgy or ritual that will help that community as it grapples with the impact of that disaster. After a community experiences a disaster or a family experiences a personal tragedy or death, the world is never the same again, and nothing will make it so. We are called to help people in their journey through life with all that it brings. Hopefully, in that journey, we may help them experience God's grace, available to all creation.

Although in our times and society fewer people attend regular church services than in the past, the community still looks to the Church in times of need or disaster, just as families do for the rites of passages in their lives..

Whatever the community's motivation, this response to violence highlights the importance of the church's ritual competence in enabling a community, and even a nation, to negotiate a path through trauma. At these times the 'shadow' of human society moves to the foreground, and the reality and seeming random occurrence of evil and wrongdoing is unavoidably and painfully present. The crises created by violent events in the natural world or human society require ritual pathways to cope with the sudden disruption of the everyday patterns of life. (O'Reilly, pp.244f.)

Most people, even those who have no other contact with a church, still rely on the churches to provide rites of passage, rituals through which the meaning of the most important transitions of life, birth, marriage and death, are symbolised. For those affected by it, a disaster is a life transition which can be as significant as those normally ritualised by the church. (Lewis, p.24)

History shows that the Church has always been there to help people - individuals and communities - in their time of greatest need. It is probable that the Church has always provided a ritual response at these times. What clearly has changed is technological development that brings these traumatic events to us as they happen, quickly and visually, vividly into the homes of people who are half a world away or in their own country. The role of the media will be discussed further later, but it may also have a role in the post-disaster pastoral care of a community or nation, as it beams images of memorial services and funerals via the same means as the tragedy itself has been transmitted.

Aims

What a post-disaster service aims to achieve will vary with the nature of the service, the disaster and the resultant needs of the people. Obviously the four initial services at Thredbo, and the three a year later, had different aims, but they had some broad ones in common. A thanksgiving service after the Nyngan floods was appropriate. No-one was killed or drowned, people's homes remained standing, and they had been blessed by the generosity of the Australian people. Where homes and properties have been utterly destroyed ("it was like an atom bomb had been exploded") and loved ones and livelihoods lost, as in the case of the Ash Wednesday Bushfires, the needs of the people are different.

Any loss leads to grief - whether a family member, a home, an irreplaceable treasure, a pet, a livelihood or "a way of life." (Lewis, p.24). A service for victims of a disaster, like a funeral, should aid them in their grieving. Part of this is the opportunity to talk about their experience (Robert, p.11). Those who have been through a community disaster need an environment in which to tell their personal stories and hear the experience talked about in a community forum.

For the community, Robert (p.11) points to the need for worship to "reclaim the public space as a place of life not death" and "restore peace in the community." The former is important after a massacre in a very public place or where natural disasters claim lives. Another issue here is when the community is actually able to return to the site of a disaster. For those of Thredbo, the first opportunity to do this was twelve months after the Slip, when a candle-lit vigil was held at the exact time.

This was kept low-key, there were no formalities at all. We had candles available for people (5,000) but many brought their own. They came and went as they needed to and looked down on the site and remembered. Many climbed down on the site and sat. This was the first time they had been allowed on the site so it was important for them. One group stood on a nearby balcony and sang 'Amazing Grace'. They didn't know the words but they sang it anyway. We found it was important to be there but not to interfere. (Ps. Grahame Abrahams)

The second of these aims is unlikely to be achieved by any service alone. Sometimes a number of services, continuing through to the anniversary, help to develop a sense of restoration. For both the community and its individual members, there is a peace that having been lost, needs restoring as part of the normal process of grieving. Personal pastoral care and counselling, provision of material needs and rebuilding property may all contribute to peace-restoration. A service can also aim to provide assurance of this on-going care. (Robert, p11)

Clearly though, there is another aim that is at the core of any Christian celebration, service or rite of passage and that is to make people aware of God's never-ending love and presence. O'Reilly speaks of the "rites" that "provide reliable means to receive grace and to give expression to its presence, or need of it, in the lives of individuals and communities." (p.179) Later she writes,

... the love of God is directed towards all people and the whole creation; for the healing of hurts and the reconciling of what is separated and sundered in the human and cosmological community. This love is mediated uniquely in Jesus Christ. ... Thus these liturgies are Christian worship offered for the pastoral care of those who come seeking it, whether members of ... churches, or of the wider community which generally only acknowledges the need to celebrate or lament in times of particular joy or need. (O'Reilly, p.180)

As already suggested, people in western society are less attracted to churches today; a view championed in the media, which often mocks the institution for its antiquated values, disunity and irrelevance. Yet at rites of passage, and especially at times of sadness, distress and deep loss, people believe they can find this in a church, or at least in God. So they turn to the Church and worship services offered to help people in their grief and lostness. Ironically, the media has come to see importance in broadcasting these to the wider community in news stories or as whole services. The cynic sees the media cashing in on a public interest story, but another view held by Rex Hunt is that they fulfil a valuable role. ('The media as liturgists' in "Liturgy, Liturgists and Pt. Arthur," p.150)

There is faith out there in the community, even if not exercised formally on Sundays, and those preparing services in the wake of disasters and even funerals, ought to recognise these opportunities as times to nurture this faith. It is in times of great distress that people may experience "the nearness of God", as Laurie Green writes,

... When asked whether or not they believe in God, ... many will say that they do, and many will go further and witness to an experience of the nearness of God in their own lives. Some feel that the Christian faith especially holds out a promise of meaning and value which they yearn for, and of which they have had some glimpses within their own experience.

(Laurie Green, **Let's Do Theology: A Pastoral Care Resource Book**, Mowbray, Great Britain, 1990, in Robert, p.8)

O'Reilly summarises these aims, speaking of the people looking "to the churches and leaders of other religions to gather the community to express their grief and sense of disorder, and to restore hope and reorient the community." Elsewhere she suggests "the crises created" by disasters "require ritual pathways to cope with the sudden disruption of the everyday patterns of living." (O'Reilly, pp. 243, 245). Another understanding of the role of disaster liturgies speaks of the central events of our faith. "Community people will be helped to move away from the crucifixion into the resurrection of new life." (Robert, p.10)

These aims are closely linked to the "essential ingredients of a Christian ritual". This is seen in the following list of "essentials" which will be expanded upon in the following sections.

- a. *The gathered people must be able to sense the 'specialness' of the occasion. There must be clearly defined entry and exit points.*
- b. *There must be clearly defined linkage with our faith tradition as people are helped to deal with the precariousness of life.*
- c. *There needs to be reciprocal reaction to and from God. A time for speaking to God and a time for listening. ...*
- d. *There needs to be clear, unembarrassed leadership which is appropriately marked.*

(Graham Hughes' **Lecture Notes from United Theological College**, in Robert, p.14)

Timing and Other Agenda

When to hold a service will attract diverse opinion, depending on the different circumstances of the disaster and its effect on a defined community. This requires some speculation, with no certainty of a definitive answer. “It takes a great deal of sensitivity to gauge when it is the ‘right time’ to move the community” from the crucifixion stage, to the “celebration of resurrection”. (Robert, p.11)

In these liturgical resources, there are services held within 24 hours of the event. For example, the bus crash at Maryborough and the Thredbo disaster. In the former case, the names of the dead had not been announced, although they were all known in the community. The churches felt immediate response was needed because of the shock generated by the accident.

In the case of Thredbo, initial services were held on the two days after the Slip on the Thursday night. Essentially the local ministers were gathering the people together to pray as excavation of the site searching for survivors and bodies continued. This was also a response to the impact of shock, again on a close-knit community, who would have known who was missing. (The only survivor was dug out on the Saturday.) On the Monday was the official national service called a “Prayer Service for the Ecumenical Gathering”. The early services were not given a name so the media called them Memorial Services.

This caused a great deal of grief within the village as they believed we were giving up hope, and that we were burying their people before they knew if they were dead. This is one thing I would be extremely careful of if involved in anything like this again. Be explicit as to what the service is! (Ps. Grahame Abrahams)

The Memorial Service was the following Friday, more than a week after the Slip.

Whilst the first service was organised quickly after the event, there were a number of services over 8 days which served different purposes. However, had there been a plan to have just one service, say a memorial, clearly it would not have occurred as early as the first service did. The same is true in Maryborough, where the Memorial Service was held three weeks after the crash. Both incidents presented initial uncertainty about the victims, but they also caused shock in close-knit communities, which needed to be addressed. Local clergy, understanding the situation well, believed an initial service with a specific purpose was warranted.

Where a disaster lasts over a period of time, such as a flood, or where a large number of the community are affected, requiring more immediate and urgent assistance in practical ways as a result of a fire, flood or storm damage, it is more appropriate to wait. There is a sense here in which the agony continues – “you can’t have a service of resurrection too soon if people are still on the cross; it’s hard to celebrate resurrection when you are feeling crucified”. After the Nyngan floods, there was a desire to return to normal as quickly as possible, so the congregation of the local Uniting Church gathered for their normal worship service as soon as people were able to start returning to their homes. When most people had returned, the local ministers organised an ecumenical service of Thanksgiving. Because homes were not actually destroyed nor lives lost, that delay may be shorter than would be needed where property is destroyed and lives lost.

The Strathfield Shopping Centre shootings were a case where a high profile community meeting place was violated and both workers and casual shoppers, were traumatized. The dead, including shopkeepers and shoppers, came from no one group. Given it was a large suburban complex, those affected were from a number of localities in the district. This meant that the very task of defining the group of people was a difficult one. Shirley Maddox, a local Uniting Church minister at the time, suggests the need in such a case to be available one day later, but then again one week later. People will be saying “I’m usually here at that time, but on that day I was ... Why am I safe?... Is _____ wounded/dead etc.?”

The local community was in shock, that such an horrific tragedy could happen in their shopping centre. There are similarities and significant differences between this event and the one at Thredbo. On timing of a service, Shirley writes:

Do not be stampeded into holding a service too quickly. People want to do it soon and get it over, but you need to wait - we waited 3 weeks - to have time to arrange it properly when the initial counselling is over. It gives time too to include various community groups. All this is important in making a closure.

Clearly this service was an important part of the healing process and followed much counselling. At Thredbo, the early services played a key role in the pastoral care when so much uncertainty and shock was being absorbed by a small close-knit community. As one thinks it through, it can be seen that what was done at Thredbo was right given the nature of the tragedy and the community affected. What was done at Strathfield differed for reasons that become clearer on analysis of the situation; and was also ‘right’.

At Hoddle Street in Melbourne, the shooting on a busy suburban street and its impact were not so confined as in a shopping centre. Follow-up was more difficult because those affected were from a wider area than a community or centre with a life of its own. The service following the Hoddle Street shootings was nine weeks after the event.

Those who know the situation and the people well are best placed to decide the timing for any services held after a tragedy. There is probably no rule of thumb, but in the cases considered here the reasons for the action taken can be understood when one considers the circumstances of the event and follow-up required.

Shirley Maddox’s comment about some wanting to get the service over and done with raises an issue about who sets the agenda for post-disaster services. Grahame Abrahams writing about services held on the anniversary of Thredbo makes some important points:

At the Anniversary weekend we found the company (... the local council) decided what services they wanted. They wanted to tell the people how and when to grieve; this caused a deal of pain. The village people asked us for a third service where they could dedicate their memorial and that the media didn’t know about. Word of mouth drew together about 300 people (the permanent population of the village was 200). It was done so well the media did not know ...

(One) service was for the village and family. It was advertised but the media were asked to keep their distance and they were told that they could conduct interviews afterwards with the ministers. They respected this to their credit.

.... At the official service with all the dignitaries.... we excluded church dignitaries like bishops (from taking part). In these circumstances these people can take away from the ministry of the local people. The wider church should be there to support, not to come in and take over. The only official guest was the Governor General. Politicians who came did so as members of the public and just sat in the congregation. No seats were set aside for them. This took the political grandstanding out of the event.

These comments lead to the importance of Anniversary services. Those involved in pastoral ministry will know the importance of helping people deal with the anniversary of a loved one's death, and so too the anniversary of any other loss or a community's loss. Most tragedies have had services to mark the Anniversary. At Strathfield, people gather annually at the tree planted in memory of victims. In the case of the Port Arthur slaying, where victims came from various states so that the impact of the event was widespread, Memorial and then Anniversary services were held in various cities across the country.

From this discussion, and from the liturgies in these resources, it can be seen that various services will be held in response to a tragedy. In this context, it should be noted that very specific services might be important to particular groups of people. Note for example the Service of Restoration held for staff at the Royal Hobart Hospital about a week after the Port Arthur shootings. Medical staff and emergency personnel have special needs after a disaster and should not be forgotten. Similarly, a special service might be considered where victims have friends and peers from a particular place such as a school, workplace, sporting or social club. This could be considered even in the case of the death of one individual under normal circumstances, but takes on more critical importance in the case of shock associated with tragedy or suicide. Such a service should be conducted in association with appropriate counselling and can have a significant influence on the healing of that group after their loss of a valued peer.

Personnel and Places

At times of tragedy it is important the Church is seen to be united and work co-operatively in the relief effort, pastoral care and any services that are held. If any one denomination acts in a way that is unhelpful, there is a danger that public reaction to this may be directed at the Church at large rather than just the offending denomination and its representatives. Churches that know their community well and which are active in its life in the good times as well as the bad, and do not allow theology or denominational goals to get in the way of its care for non-members, are those most likely to have the respect of the community in times of tragedy, and this will continue when a form of normality returns.

While their participation in disaster recovery is regarded as part of the total welfare response to a disaster, churches bring more to the disaster recovery processes than the ability to act as an auxiliary welfare agency within the community. Their faithfulness to their calling and their responsibility to the community of which they are a part demands that their ministry relate the gospel of Jesus Christ to the disaster affected community. The attitude and sensitivity with which this is done will be vital. Many people working in secular agencies will be justly sceptical of the value of the churches' role in disaster recovery simply because of negative experiences relating to the way in which some churches proclaim the gospel.

If any churches seek to share the gospel in a trite, simplistic, self-righteous, guilt-inducing or proselytising manner in a post-disaster situation, they will find themselves contributing to the disaster rather than aiding recovery. Churches which choose to define themselves over and against the general community are particularly vulnerable to this danger. (Smith, p. 24)

O'Reilly indirectly gives an example of this issue when she writes that "contemporary theological sensibilities would, rightly, raise an outcry at any simplistic linking of God's anger and punishment with violent events in society". (O'Reilly, p.244)

An example of a community's discomfort with the Church came up in the preparing of these liturgical resources. A copy was sought of the liturgy that was held after a particular local natural disaster that received national coverage, because a number of people, including children died. The response was that the close-knit community affected had closed ranks, and excluded the local clergy from taking a role in the preparation of a service. The community did its 'own thing'. Whilst this has to be respected, it must also be recognised that the wider community is affected by even the most local or personal tragedy, and members of that wider community may need help with their grief.

It is better then that services are ecumenical, and advertised as such, after being organised by as many of the churches in the community as possible, especially the mainline churches which those outside the Church will recognise, trust and feel comfortable with. Often, this will be done through the local ministers' group, fellowship or association, which has an ongoing life of its own.

Where the community is rural, regional or suburban, local wisdom ought to prevail about when to involve heads of churches, like Bishops and Moderators. It is important that the worship leaders for some services are identified by the community as those who have been with them in their struggle, providing pastoral care from day one. Note for example, Grahame Abraham's comments in the above section. However, for the nationally televised service held soon after the Thredbo Slip, local Bishops took part in the service. Where a Memorial or Anniversary Service is held in a capital or regional city, it is appropriate to choose a landmark church, such as a cathedral, with the appropriate Church Leaders taking leading roles. In that situation the non-church going members of the community will often recognise a cathedral as a primary church in their city and see it as the 'right' place for such a service. It may also be where they have been for the funerals of local dignitaries or for weddings, so going there will not provide concern or discomfort, as the entrance into some other places of worship may. In cities, it will often be the heads of churches who have taken the initiative in holding a service. There are examples in this collection.

Organisers of these services should also contact community, state and national leaders as is appropriate and possible. Note the role of leaders such as Governors and the Governor-General in the above services. In the last section, Grahame Abrahams highlighted the need to prevent dignitaries, particularly politicians, grandstanding at a post-disaster service. The solution, in his case, was not to set aside special seats for any that attended, ensuring they were seen as ordinary members of the congregation.

Community leaders can be invited to help prepare services, though church leaders need to ensure they do not try to control the agenda. Even if these leaders are neither involved in the preparation nor in an up-front role on the day, they need to be alerted to the event personally, so they can show support and leadership to the community by attending and encouraging others to do so. Others of the community who might be given a role in services include victims or their relatives; rescue/recovery/restoration personnel and personnel involved in a primary organisation (eg. after a fire in an institution); and, of course leaders, like mayors, who can set something of the tone for looking forward to the restoration of a community.

Further comment on the site of services is helpful. Sometimes it will be appropriate that certain services be held in a public place rather than a church building. These will be more familiar and hold greater significance for a community recovering from a tragedy. They may simply be at a park or a local hall. Often a memorial is erected in memory of those who died, or a tree planted, so obviously the dedication/planting of these happens where they are. A public space may also be the biggest available.

If the service is to be held at a location that holds special significance with respect to a tragedy, or is 'where it actually happened', care is needed. Such a site, because of its fresh traumatic memories, may be too difficult for the people to come to worship in a frame of mind to receive the grace the service wishes to offer. Some types of service will be more appropriate to be held at the site than others, for example, the candle-lit vigil at the Thredbo Slip site. Of course the site may not be available to the public when the initial services are held. (Thredbo site was closed for a year because of safety concerns). Sites may be inappropriate because during the course of an ongoing situation they have come to symbolise something that contributed to the situation. For example, in the case of a flood, it was suggested that the levy bank was not the place to hold a thanksgiving service because it had come to represent disunity.

It may also be appropriate to link the Memorial Service with the actual site in some other cleansing way. During the Strathfield Memorial Service, a group consisting of clergy, survivors, victims' relatives and others, went into the plaza and exchanged the peace. "It was a powerful, painful and difficult moment." Ministers and others may also want to have private or small group prayers outside the service in a public place 'stained by tragedy', in order to contribute to the reclaiming of "the public space as a place of life not death." (Robert, p. 11)

THE LITURGY

This collection of liturgies provides ideas of what can be included in post-disaster services. Once again, the contents and emphases of the service will depend on the aim of the service and nature of the tragedy. Where there have been fatalities, support for survivors and victims' families is important. Where there has been no death but significant property loss, the grief will be different and there will be some cause for thanksgiving. A flood may damage property and take time to abate but not necessarily destroy homes; a fire will do both, but swiftly. The liturgical response will differ. A shooting may not require a large scale rescue, quelling of the disaster (as in a flood or fire), or ongoing restoration program. Those who have needed and appreciated the work of firefighters, recovery teams, restoration workers, medical teams and so on, will want to take time to be thankful and prayerfully supportive of these people, many being volunteers.

It has been acknowledged that many who attend services after disasters and even personal tragedies will not be regular church attendees, save for attendance at services for rites of passage - birth (baptism), marriage and death (funeral). Robert asks a crucial question about the nature of worship on these occasions: *"Should this be a totally God-centred service, as in 'normal' Sunday worship; a simple gathering that emphasises community and shared grief and pain with no overt references to God, or a mixture of both?"* (p.13f.) Clearly, a mixture is difficult because it cannot be God-centred and have no overt references to God. A community service can place greater emphasis or priority on simplicity and specific focus than a 'normal' Sunday service might.

Church leaders preparing these liturgies will want to ensure a firm Christian foundation so as to identify the hope for new/eternal life that Christians believe comes only from God. However, care should be taken to ensure the language of the liturgy is not so foreign to worshippers that the message is lost. Or that they leave the service confused about what has been offered rather than feeling comforted. The promises of God are to be claimed, but care is needed that an assumption is not conveyed that everyone at the service believes in them. Our regular Sunday liturgies make these assumptions all the time where it is easy to do this automatically.

Similarly, non-church people in this situation ought not to be made uncomfortable or embarrassed because they do not know correct liturgical or ritual behaviour, like when to stand, sit or other actions that may be required/expected of them. There are two issues here. People have come for help. They are experiencing many emotions and they do not need also to be confused, embarrassed, isolated or even angered by the words and rituals of the service. The Church is also on show, and so without detracting from the purpose of the service, it needs to demonstrate its relevance to a modern society that has largely made up its mind about Church, seeing it in an unfavourable light. Tragic experiences in the lives of individuals will often bring them to a church looking for answers about life, or for ongoing comfort and support. A public memorial service may decide for such people whether the Church could actually provide this for them, or whether they need to look elsewhere.

A memorial service for people who have lost their lives in a tragedy will have many of the components of a funeral service without a focus on the individual. This may depend though on the number of people being remembered and whether they shared a common bond. For example, a service for those killed in the fire at Kew cottages, included a piece describing the personalities of each of those who died, who lived together in that residential care unit. Liturgy aside, a printed order of service will often list the names of the victims, and in some cases their photos (for example, in the case of the soldiers killed in the Blackhawk crash). While symbolism will be discussed separately, victims can be remembered by individual symbols or reminders, like candles, single blooms, balloons released, planting of trees, white crosses etc. These can help people focus their grief, especially if a family member or friend of the bereaved takes some action with that symbol - lights the candle or carries it out, releases the balloon, plants the tree.

Early in a post-disaster service, a clear and "truthful" statement should be made that names the situation (i.e. the tragedy) and acknowledges the "critical experience of dislocation and distress". (O'Reilly, p.195) Within this statement there ought to be recognition of the nature of God, and the hope and love we can experience in God that can comfort people in their current time of suffering.

It is appropriate to establish here that an aim of the service is to comfort those grieving loss of loved ones, homes, possessions or life styles. Otherwise this will be picked up in later prayers for the people. Here is part of a 'gathering' statement that does some of this:

Friends, we have come together today to remember the terrible and tragic events (here name them specifically) which have happened in our community. Our hearts are appalled within us and we reach out to God and to each other.

We come to affirm that even in the midst of this tragedy we can continue as a community, supporting one another and rekindling our hope in the goodness of God's gift of life together. ...

Together now we are taking a step to heal and give testimony to our desire for a healed community.

It is God who cares for us, who will bring us the healing and comfort we seek.

Let us now ask God for this gift.

(O'Reilly, pp.246-7)¹

Note also the 'Call to Worship' for the Anniversary Service held a year after Port Arthur at Wesley Church, Melbourne in these liturgies and the way it gathers together different groups of people and very simply identifies needs of people and aims of the service. The Call to Worship for the Commemoration and Renewal Service after the Newcastle Earthquake provides another good example. Note also the way in which statements about the tragedy are worked into a prayer in the Memorial Service for those killed in the Blackhawk accident. In these examples you will find the 'God' language is simple, direct and non-threatening.

As in any worship there will be several different types of prayer. In an appropriate way, thanksgiving will be given. This may include thanks for the lack of serious permanent damage to property; the lack of loss of life; for acts of courage; for the work of medical staff, fire-fighters, rescue crews and those who have helped with restoration and repairs; those who have collected and distributed relief help etc; for those who have given food, money and other material needs – both individuals and organisations; and so on, according to the circumstances.

Other prayer will help people to give meaning and lament to what has happened - "the 'unspoken rawness' of feelings" (O'Reilly, p.195). Also to endeavour to give words to people's anger and struggle to understand and accept, and yet to affirm God, who may be blamed by some people, as One ready to receive all this and still provide love and support. Speaking of a prayer that does this, O'Reilly writes:

Drawing on Bruegemann it implies the psalmist's cry of abandonment to question God while acknowledging that God has embraced our human condition, entering into human grief and human death. ... (It) offers a movement from blame to acceptance through recognition of God's embrace of us in Jesus, Risen Christ, concluding with a petition to the Spirit whose presence sustains and heals, and a closing affirmation of God. ... (It) anticipates and moves ... (the bereaved) towards new 'normality' by allowing for honest expression of both complaint against God and affirmation of God. (O'Reilly, P.195)²

¹ The full text of this Gathering is in the service entitled 'A Liturgy for a Community in Shock and Grief after Violence or Accident'.

² See Walter Bruegemann, "The Formfulness of Grief", *Interpretation*, 31/3 (1977), pp. 263-275.

Again the simplicity of the language in the prayer to which she refers is striking, as the following extracts illustrate:

*Tender and compassionate God, we mourn the passing of ...
You see our tears
We pray that you will be present in this place
and especially bring your comfort to ...
in their time of darkness.
We cry out to you from the depths of our very being...*

*Risen Christ, we know that you come to us
in our sorrow and our pain,
for you have shared our common life
and known the grief of loss,
and the despair of death's presence.*

*Come now, Spirit of Healing Love,
sustain and comfort us whose hearts are heavy with grief,
for you alone uphold us at all times and in all places,
Blessed be God for ever. (O'Reilly, p.196)*

Prayers for others will draw together all those with specific needs as a result of the tragedy. These can be named as specifically as possible, even to naming people where the list of fatalities or victims allow this. Such prayers can give opportunity for a range of people to be involved including civic and community leaders, those who have led recovery units, staff of institutions, schools or other specific organisations affected. It may be a releasing and healing thing to invite people to name aloud or silently in their hearts, particular people whom they would want to commit into God's tender and loving arms.

Singing in worship is something Christians take for granted; but church is one of the few places adults actually sing together on a regular basis. It is not uncommon for singing at weddings and funerals to flounder because most people do not know the hymn or are not used to singing in public. In any service you will find those who just do not sing. O'Reilly may be right in saying that "singing together early in the liturgy has the effect of creating an assembly of those who have gathered", and again that it is "a good way to conclude"; but her warning that "tunes should be well known and the words simple and relevant to what has occurred to the community" is an important one. (O'Reilly, pp.247,9)

It cannot be assumed that what is well-known to a church community will be as known to the wider community. Songs that are regularly sung at funerals may be better known and appropriate. There are also those that are more widely known from popular exposure or for other reasons, like "Amazing Grace" (though note the comment about its spontaneous rendition at the Thredbo vigil), "How Great Thou Art" and "The Lord's Prayer". If possible a local choir, band or singing group may assist by leading singing, or indeed provide items where congregational participation becomes optional, so that if no one joins in the singing it does not detract from the service.

There seems to be an unwritten 'rule' that all music at these services must be specifically religious. On this issue, the comments made in these liturgical resources in the section on funerals held for suicide victims are worth thinking about. Given that so many suicide victims and their peers are from the Baby-boomer age group or their children, for whom music has always been a part of their life, it is recommended that liturgists feel free to use secular music which expresses or explores the emotions the mourners are grappling with. The same could be considered for services responding to disasters. Similarly there could be other artistic forms used in the services presenting material that is not specifically Christian, provided it does not detract from the Christian nature of the worship or from the overriding aims of the service and the help it is trying to give. The comments already made about the liturgy's form and language in general with respect to helping those who congregate, are equally true of the music and the singing. O'Reilly affirms this:

The guiding principle in choices for this liturgy should be the pastoral care of people who have firm, feeble or no faith yet have gathered in response to the mystery of suffering and are searching for authentic hope. It is important to do all that is possible to enable people to participate without feeling confused or inept in the situation. (O'Reilly, p.249)

As with any worship service, it is important that a post-disaster liturgy ends on a strong, positive note that enables participants to leave with a sense of hope and a feeling that the service will help their recovery from the trauma they have experienced. It is good if people can take away something concrete that will help in the ongoing process - be it a symbol of hope or even the order of service on which is printed some words of encouragement. It is also important that there are people who are trained and prepared who are available to provide pastoral care, prayer or such individual assistance as any may needed or requested. The service can be an important aid to their recovery, giving words and voice to feelings they are struggling with, or perhaps bring home the stark reality of their loss (as can occur at a funeral). If clergy or others appropriately trained for the task are sensitive and aware of how individuals are feeling, this help can be made available. At the Port Arthur Anniversary service at Wesley Church, Melbourne, it was noted on the service sheet that those directly affected by the tragedy could meet together after the service in a private area where assistance can be made available or stories shared.

USE of SYMBOLS and STORIES

Passing references have been made to the importance of using symbols in these services. Drawing on the work of Green and Halley, Robert makes a powerful point about the role of symbols that provides a good introduction to the discussion here.

While change is essential to living growth it cannot be rushed. It usually requires a great deal of patience, a great deal of time, just as it takes a great deal of time and patience for a baby to become an adult. ...

Christians need to understand that Australia, like most Western societies, lives in “the civilization of the image”.³ It is therefore necessary for liturgy to move from an almost cerebral, “linguistic”⁴ formula to one which integrates the cognitive, emotive and directive influences of symbols. The healing process can only begin when the trauma is symbolised, enabling people to come to terms with their grief and pain, while at the same time allowing them to pick up the shattered pieces of their dreams and aspirations as they continue following the course of their lives. (Robert, p.6)

Like any life experience, a disaster will produce for the community and individuals affected, ordinary things which take on new significance, symbolising what they have been through and the continuing struggle towards recovery. There will be symbols of restoration and symbols of the tragedy itself. There will be those natural steps of rebuilding that come to symbolise recovery and “new life”, like the rebuilding of fences after a bushfire or flood (Lewis, p.24). The very site at which a tragedy has occurred becomes its own symbol, even in a form that is changed from the time of the incident. One example of this is the Thredbo slip site, and the significance it took on when after all the debris had been cleared away and the site made safe, it was reopened a year later and people gathered at it for a candle-lit vigil. Another example was the cafe at which most of the Port Arthur shootings took place, which was destroyed because of the evil act it represented, but what was left became a symbolic memorial to the slain.

The use of such symbols in an act of worship can be cathartic, painful and even in the pain, produce healing. They can give the multitude of memories some form of unity. The saying that a “picture is worth a thousand words” is equally true of symbols; and liturgists should not be afraid to let symbols do the ‘talking’ when words will never suffice, and verbosity results from attempts to find the right words.

Churches that are aware of the sacramental nature of the whole of life will be able to take the symbols which emerge in a disaster affected community and incorporate them in the liturgy of their regular worship and in ritual events such as special services. In this way the churches may enable the community to reflect on its experience in the context of the gospel and thus, together with the community, experience new hope and strength to undergo the recovery process. (Lewis, pp. 24f.)

A powerful example of this is the crucifix of the “mangled” Christ in the next article about post-Cyclone Tracy Darwin.

For the actual service, symbols can be used in many ways, and the imagination of individual liturgists who know the community and the event will determine the best use of what is appropriate for their situation. A few comments will suffice to fuel this imagination. The relationship between the site of the service and the tragedy site can make the former its own symbol. Alternatively the worship space may be appropriately ‘decorated’ with symbols. It can be very powerful for symbols of a tragedy to be brought forward at a key point in the service and laid at the front of the space, or perhaps at the ‘foot of the cross’. Sometimes each person at a service has been given a symbol, such as a seed or bulb, to take from the service and use to help them to remember, but also to give hope of new life for the future.

³ Cyril Hailey, “Inculturation and Polyethnicity” in *The Cultured Pearl* (ed. J. Houston), Melbourne, JBCE, 1988, p. 39

⁴ Robin Green, *Only Connect: Worship and Liturgy from the Perspective of Pastoral Care*, Darton, Longman and Todd, Great Britain, 1993, p.22.

Symbols can be very powerful, and caution is needed in the use of symbols that can confront reality but also distress people beyond what they can bear. Symbols used in worship are usually visual. But there are symbols to trigger any of the senses and care must be taken with the use of the symbols that evoke the use of senses other than the visual. Sounds like sirens, winds and crackling flames, and smell senses like smoke and mould, even were they recreatable during a service may be too distressing for people in that context, and take the symbol beyond the useful purpose for which it has been presented. (When I was only 5 years old I witnessed a large bushfire that threatened my home town, and destroyed a number of dwellings. For years afterwards, I was physically sick with fear when I saw smoke or fire in a non-domestic setting, even some distance away).

The symbols may be frightening ones that seem to be out of place in a worship setting. (For example, Bruce Johnson's use of a gun "for putting down stock" as one of his symbols in his drought service in Liebelt and Nicholls (ed.), p.26.) Clearly though, a gun as a symbol at a service after a shooting, would be in the category of what has just been described as "too distressing" and clearly part of the evil from which healing is now needed. Symbols may evoke a response; but even a negative response can be healing. But the previous caution and plea for sensitivity remains. (John van Reit tells of a man who came forward at a service after floods at Benalla, and threw aside in anger a mop, being used as a symbol of cleaning up and restoration. Whilst this was a negative response, it was an appropriate expression for the man, and others present could identify with him, even if they were not about to copy him).

Stories, like symbols, enable people to be in touch with and express their emotional response to the tragic experiences they have had. In his sermon delivered a week after Port Arthur, Rex Hunt suggested that "in the telling and listening to stories, I and we, could find the clues for coping" (see "In the Aftermath of Port Arthur" liturgy). Through pastoral care, people will be encouraged to talk about their experiences and tell their stories. It is also valuable for community members to share their stories with one another. It may be appropriate to have some share their story during services or for some stories that have been heard from people to be shared in the message. Clearly, adequate time will not be available for everyone's story to be told. As with funerals, a time for refreshments after a post-disaster service is important as a story-sharing time amongst members of the community. People ought to be encouraged during the service, and at other times, to seek out opportunities to share these stories. Another approach may be to use some designated 'story-tellers' to collect up some of the stories and other verbal history of the tragedy, and for these collections then to be written up in a publication available to all community members, or for these tellers to be given opportunities to tell the stories as guest speakers at service clubs, sports clubs, schools and in normal worship services. Note also Rex Hunt's use of story in the sermon just referred to in these liturgical resources.

In encouraging community members to tell their stories, it needs to be sensitively recognised that some will be so traumatised as to not be able to tell their story for some time after the event. "Some people may lock the trauma within themselves and never be able to speak about it". Having written this, Robert cites the example of returned soldiers who have never been able to talk about the atrocities of war (Robert, p.11). This may be particularly so where a person has actually witnessed someone, especially a loved one, die before their eyes.

Counselling will be needed to help such people in dealing with what they have “locked” away, and sometimes services, symbols and others’ stories may help them to suddenly burst forth with their stories in an emotional outpouring, but this will only happen at the ‘right time’ for them. This relates closely to Robert’s comment that “it takes a great deal of sensitivity to gauge when it is the ‘right time’ to move the community from the stage of crucifixion into the celebration of resurrection”. (Robert, p.11)

Children are used to expressing experiences in stories and art, and should be encouraged to do so, and the results taken seriously and talked through with them. Just as children are often not given adequate pastoral care after the ‘normal’ death of a non-immediate family member, this may also be the case after a tragedy if the whole community is affected or if it is not specifically and uniquely related to a place that is important to them. If there is a fire or shooting at a school the children are counselled. A tragedy in a wider community might see them ‘relegated’ to just one group among many who suffer, and they may not get special attention. A special service could be considered at schools, which will be prepared at a level appropriate to the age group of the children. This especially ought to happen when one or more children of the school die (even after an illness).

Stories can be told in a variety of art forms, such as art, drama, dance, photography, poetry and music. These could be displayed or presented at a service or at schools, libraries and other public places. Using the gifts of the community can be of invaluable assistance in helping the community in its healing process. (Robert, p. 10) As it was earlier suggested, a storyteller could collect stories, so too local painters, poets, photographers, dancers and musicians could be used in similar ways.

THE MEDIA

It was announced by the Prime Minister on national television that a public service was going to be held for the victims of Thredbo. It raised the question of whether this said as much about politicians as it did about the role of the modern media in covering tragedies. Clearly the media needs to report on the types of disasters that are spoken of in these resources. In these specific cases, quite detailed news footage and extensive interviews were used. Sometimes usual television and radio programmes have been suspended in order to give ongoing coverage of an unfolding drama. Then when major services have been held, or even the funerals of individual victims, the media has been present, and clips or even whole services have been transmitted via the radio or television. Those, whose major roles are pastoral and liturgical, may have concern about the approach, at times intrusive, of the media in covering these events. These concerns are sometimes discussed on media programs after ‘the dust has settled.’ (see also Rex Hunt’s comments on p. 149)

These concerns acknowledged, the media can assist those preparing liturgies. The details of major public services should be given to the media via a media release, for in the case of a significant community tragedy, it will be the vehicle by which many will hear of the service. Be very explicit as to what kind of service it is and what it is to be called. (Recalling the comments already mentioned about the Thredbo experience when the media called it a Memorial service, whilst the search and recovery of bodies was still proceeding, causing much stress to the community.)

The issue of the media's presence at a service is a vexed one. Following Thredbo, there was one private service for the community which was intentionally and carefully kept secret from the media; at another the media was asked to keep its distance, which they did "to their credit", with the option of interviews with the clergy afterwards; the public national service, in the presence of the Governor General and other dignitaries was televised live.

When the media is adequately briefed about options, most of its representatives will be responsible and sensitive to the needs and suffering of the community. Adequate opportunity needs to be given for them to do their job, and one way of avoiding inappropriate contact is to provide them sufficient information and interview opportunities etc., so that they are discouraged from acting in an unhelpful manner. If possible, allow the major public service to be transmitted, stipulating that equipment must not become intrusive and that the needs and feelings of mourners and others suffering need to be respected. The best and most common way is to allow one camera to film the service with footage available to all channels. It is helpful if there is someone without a major role in the leadership of the service who has all the details and who can take responsibility for media liaison. The role could extend to indicating to media what contact with people would be pastorally insensitive, but also arranging suitable people to give interviews after the service. This should protect those who are most vulnerable and for whom that service will be emotionally draining enough, without their having to worry about media intrusiveness.

The media has a role as "liturgists" in helping those physically distant from a tragedy to deal with their grief. However, those preparing the worship and providing ongoing pastoral care, have a right to shield community members who are grieving and suffering, from inappropriate and insensitive intrusion by the media.

SUMMARY

... any Community Memorial Ritual must be owned by the whole community. The pastoral task of enabling such a ritual transition requires an understanding of people's individual world views, it means understanding that people's interpretation of a message is intrinsically intertwined with their past experiences. At times this can result in an impaired understanding due to personal prejudices which may block comprehension.⁵ But this can be overcome if the messages are contemporized through the use of (symbols and) the people's stories because they suit the surrounding environment and are "easy to understand"⁶. Contemporization, inclusive language and simplicity should be the guiding factors in any ritual preparation but care needs to be taken to ensure that the overall ritual is grounded in the tradition of those represented and does not move into the arena of gimmickry or over-dramatization. (Robert, p.17)

⁵ Myron R. Charter, "Listening and Preaching" from *Preaching as Communication*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1981, p.44

⁶ Mark Searle (ed.) *Parish: A Place to Worship*, Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press 1981, p.83

In summary, here is a list of issues raised in this article that need to be considered in the preparation of the liturgy for use after a disaster.

1. Different disaster situations will require different services, or a group of services. The better those preparing the service know the community and the situation, the more appropriate the worship is likely to be. What the liturgies aim to do will vary according to the needs of victims, their families and their communities, timing and location and people involved in preparing and leading the services.
2. It is preferable that services are ecumenical, prepared and led by clergy who have been at the forefront of providing ongoing pastoral care and relief in the aftermath of the tragedy. Community leaders can also be involved. The appropriate participation of Church and State dignitaries during a service needs careful consideration.
3. Sensitive listening to what people are indicating they want and need should be given high priority in making decisions. The agenda of other groups could impinge on these needs.
4. The content of the liturgy such as prayers and singing/music should recognise that many who attend the services may be limited in their experience of Christian worship to rites of passage. Endeavour to make the words and theological statements simple yet relevant. Explore ways to ensure that people are comfortable with participating or not participating in the singing and other components of the service, and that they know what actions are expected of them. Do not assume knowledge regular worship attendees have.
5. Begin with a simple but truthful statement of what has happened, the needs of people, and the aims of the service, including a helpful recognition of the nature of God and where He is in all of this. End on a strong definite note, conveying a sense of hope for the future.
6. The use of symbols and stories is helpful, can be very powerful, and can play an important role in the ongoing healing process. Sensitivity should be used in deciding what is actually used in a service.
7. The media can be a helpful ally, and if kept adequately briefed, will generally be co-operative. Give services the names you want, or media may use unhelpful titles, and liaise with them carefully so that it is clear what is appropriate, particularly to respect the privacy of those who are suffering.
8. As with any significant loss or dislocation of life style, anniversaries are important and should, if possible, be recognised with a service and other appropriate actions, such as dedication of a memorial (if this has not already occurred).
9. In all that happens after a disaster, care for the people affected is paramount. Clergy and others involved should endeavour to have all that is done working together in harmony to provide care and help so that people can move onto the next stage of their life journey, acknowledging that for them, life can never be quite the same.

Rev PHILIP LIEBELT

Liebelt, Philip & Nicholls, Noel (ed.) *Gentle Rain on Parched Earth*, JBCE, Melbourne, 1996

O'Reilly, Colleen A., *How Liturgy cares for us in Personal and Communal Settings*
An unpublished dissertation presented to the Committee for Advanced Studies,
San Francisco Theological Seminary in partial completion of the requirements for
the degree of D.Min., 1996.

Robert, Chris, *Information required to design a meaningful liturgy for a community after a bushfire*. An unpublished research project for studies in 'Liturgy for the Unchurched', United Theological College, Sydney, Undated.

Smith, Brian Lewis, "Rites of Passage-Symbolism, Ritual, Liturgy and Theology in Disaster Recovery", in *Post-Disaster Pastoral Ministry within South Australia*, Uniting Church in Australia, South Australian Synod, 1989.

Various letters, papers and phone conversations from a variety of ministers who have taken a role in post-disaster liturgies, including Rev Shirley Maddox, Rev Michael Barnes and Pastor Grahame Abrahams, all settlements in the UCA, NSW Synod; Rev John van Riet, settled in UCA, Victorian Synod and Rev Syd Smale, a Uniting Church minister who co-ordinates the Victorian Council of Churches Disaster Relief Committee.

A Theology from Natural Disaster

An Account of Cyclone Tracy
and
the Darwin Uniting Church

OPENING UP THE SUBJECT

The background of this paper is the tropical gateway City of Darwin.

On Christmas Eve, 1974, Cyclone Tracy ripped the heart out of a city of 48,000 people. Winds were among the highest ever recorded as shown by how the gauge at the Darwin Airport recorded one gust at 217 km.p.h. and then shattered. On either side of the cyclone's eye, the wind gusted at 250 km.p.h. Rain fell incessantly. Noise outside the rending shelters in which we huddled was horrendous. In this Dante's Inferno of sound and natural fury, the boundaries of the rational and the irrational seemed to merge. The experience was unreal.

Afterwards, when the winds died away at 7.00am on Christmas Day, the City of Darwin faced a crisis of mind-boggling magnitude. The clear task, then, was to mediate reconstruction in both the fabric and the lives of the community. The Church in the midst of this T.S. Eliot wasteland situation, had to turn from being a manager of the comfortable, to be the managers of a crisis. It is important to understand how the cyclone did not cause the crisis, but produced it.

The real crisis was the management of the aftermath effects in the life of the community and individuals. When the disaster hit Darwin, the population of Northern Territory was about 100,000 people. This is an area of 1,347,525 squarekms, which is twice the size of Texas and over a quarter the size of continental Europe.

The logistics of reconstructing the city therefore were beset by remoteness from help, and by its sense of terrible isolation. Never before were we in a position where the need for inner resources was paramount for survival. By the same token, never was the Church given a better chance of testing its faithfulness to the Gospel, and its power in the lives of people.

THE DISASTER-COPING GOD

God is an old hand at coping with disasters!

This is the insight gained by the people of Israel, when they reflected on their social history. Was it not true that God had rescued them from their captivity as slave labourers to Pharaoh in his public works programme? How agonised they had been when, at the hands of a Babylonian king, their sacred city of Jerusalem had been smashed to pieces, and their leading people exported. Then, their steady traditional, religiously comfortable life had been de-stabilised completely.

As the Psalmist laments,

*By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there we hung our lyres.
For our captors required of us, songs,
and our tormentors, mirth, saying,
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”* (Ps.137: 1-3, RSV)

This ‘disaster’ had the effect of kicking out their confined, narrowing boundaries of God. It made them re-search for a new sense of national identity and purpose. Thus, after God used a pagan emperor, Cyrus, to facilitate their return to their devastated homeland, Ezra and Nehemiah (a religious lawyer and a do-it-yourself expert) had the job of mediating the community’s reconstruction.

GOD’S PLAN DOWN TO ONE

Later, when Jesus Christ moved in the midst of the human huddle, God was faced with another disaster. When the top brass in Rome and Jerusalem consented to his death on a cross, God’s plan for human reconstruction narrowed down, alarmingly, to one frail man. All seemed lost when the man who had started life in a borrowed cradle, ended it in a borrowed grave.

Then witnessing boldly, the disciples of Jesus said he had manifest himself in their experience from death’s other side. Again, it looked as if God had brought out of disaster, an event of such magnitude as to rival in importance the first creation of the world. From that time on, Christian theology began to talk of living and dying with Christ, as if He were the very key to human existence. (See eg. Romans 6:1-11)

This resurrection theme in Darwin was the sweat shirt we tried to wear as a reconstruction message.

“IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE WILL OF GOD”

On stumbling out of the acres of rubble that represented post-cyclone Darwin, I came across a distressed woman in Smith Street. She, like hundreds beside her, had lost much of her home and hope. Desperately searching for some meaning-key on which to hang her mind-bemusing experience, she stopped me in the street. Her words were fierce. Raging almost.

“Look what happened to us ... our house is gone ... furniture smashed, car mangled ... and all my husband’s work broken up in one night.”

She sobbed ... and I listened ... for more. With a flat kind of resigned voice she went on. “But I suppose it must have been the will of God.”

PIETY AS TERRIBLE THEOLOGY

Typically, an assumed piety rises its head after disaster. Although it is commended on the score of Christianity, it is disastrous as theology to say of cyclones: "I guess it must have been the will of God." Practically speaking, it was not God's intention for people's lives and their possessions to be blasted into nothingness. Rather, it is his intention that human policy makers frame cyclone-proof buildings.

Most of Darwin's houses pre-1974 were tropical matchboxes. Even a Big Bad Wolf huffing and puffing would have split them asunder, not to mention a banshee wind. Therefore to ascribe the human disaster to God's will is a pathetic, but understandable, grab at an illusive meaning for a de-stabilised life.

Quite obviously, conceptional clarity dictates a difference between God's intention for responsible human community life, and God's plan for exigencies. What is that Plan? God's intention is that people who live in cyclone-prone areas should build storm-withstanding homes. But God's plan when things go wrong is always to bring new life to and through disaster.

Ours is a church, moreover, which is the custodian-proclaimer of this fact. In a disaster situation in fact, the Church has a unique human-heeding opportunity to declare this good news. God does not put a stopper on disasters, since He is committed to the same world in which we live, and in Jesus Christ, the same human limitations. But He is in the situation with us, helping us to battle through to the end.

THE POWER OF THE MANGLED CHRIST

Two meaning-keys: Banana shoots and debris.

One week after Cyclone Tracy, life in Darwin was still like a madman's picnic. Public utilities were non-existent. Water had to be carried in containers; food found in Government distribution centres. Electricity was not connected and we drank tepid water and drinks.

High stepping over rubble became a daily chore, for streets and house yards were full of junk. It took twelve navy chaps a whole day just to clear our back and front yards of rubble and broken trees, and twisted timbers.

From this rubble, I gathered a long piece of four by three, which had been lacerated by flying corrugated iron. Across it I nailed a bent piece of broken tree branch. On the cross beam I nailed a piece of mangled iron, to resemble a tortured body.

At the close of the first Sunday service after Tracy I led the singing congregation outside to the Church lawn. There, while we sang the hymn "Jesus Christ is risen today ...", I dug a hole in the lawn, and planted the cross with the 'body' of the mangled Christ. Beside it, Padre Glen Brown's banana shoot was also put in the earth. (Alan Brown was Padre at Darwin's Air Force establishment.) It was the first new growth to appear in his garden. This was an 'ordering' gesture which took up the meaning of the post-cyclone experience.

Of all the gut-level theology lessons coming out of Tracy's clenched fist, the first was how the human spirit adores chaos - especially organisational and social chaos. This was symbolised when the ministers of the Uniting Church in Darwin each tried, in their own way, to centre purpose and direction to life.

Rev Bernie Clarke, then holding our Synod executive powers with Gordon Symons, hived off to the schools. These were staging camps for the hundreds of Darwin's suburban refugees. This is how Hedley Beare, Chief Education Officer of the Australian Capital Territory Schools Authority, describes, in a report "Cyclone Tracy and Darwin Educators", the kind of Herculean job done for the refugees at Casuarina High School:

By the evening of Christmas day, a group of refugees, several policemen and some leading public servants had set up Casuarina High School to service the thousands of people there. Work gangs dug latrine pits, provided water, were rostered for cooking and washing up.

AN ORGANISATION APPEARED OUT OF NOTHING. So called "natural organisations" sprang up everywhere.

Our Uniting Church people met frequently with Bernie and Gordon. From these meetings our life purposes began to take shape, in terms of need priorities.

My wife, Maisie, decided to have a 'social evening' for the remaining Uniting Church staff, and cooked a meal on one gas ring for 28 people. She did this without light, or help, other than her own innate ability to cope with life as a challenge.

ORDERING GESTURES

Bernie made one 'ordering gesture' while Maisie made another kind. All were to the end of bringing order out of chaos.

My parish colleague, Graeme Bence, found himself with a bashed up Church which was quite unsaleable, and an obliterated home. As his ordering gesture, Graeme put on a red Cross badge and went to help his wife, Doreen, who worked in this crucial disaster organisation.

For my part, it consisted in working with our 19 year old daughter, Kirsty, in police headquarters. Our job was to sit at the phone and co-ordinate the airlift. Kirsty's job was to be a courier between police headquarters and the air evacuation centre¹. This entailed her walking through pitch dark streets, filled with rubble. Mostly my own pre-occupation dulled my fear for her safety. Kirsty, like hundreds of others, was making her ordering gesture. She was the living link in a fragile communications system.

As Hedley Beare says, "An organisation appeared out of nothing!" Of course, he is affirming a beautiful sense of our theology. As he knew there was a famous precedent for this. For when the whole universe consisted of 'nothing' – its Biblical word is 'chaos', God made his first 'ordering' gesture. He brought order out of chaos. And, by the work of His Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, He is still doing the same.

¹ By 31st December 1974, 25,628 people had been evacuated from Darwin. This was done against the background of poor communications, a damaged airport and a devastated city.

Supremely, of course, He did the same when the world's forces of innate homicide, evil, and passionate egoism ran out of control, at the time Christ hung on the cross. That was when disaster hit Christ. Then all his strength was gone, and all his faith. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me ..." (Matt. 27:46)

Even the forces of nature protested when there was darkness over the land. (Matt. 27:45). All, then, that was left of God's footprints in the sand of Palestine was loosely blowing dust. All - that is except His grace, and power. This grace and power was the agency in its creating fertility which raised Christ from the dead.

Since then, the resurrection has stood as a symbol of power and importance over the best efforts of mankind to run the world off the rails, in the name of selfish personal and corporate aggrandisement.

We, in the Uniting Church in Darwin, tried to make this real in the post-cyclone days. Here is an example:

"LET'S GIVE TO THE CHRISTMAS BOWL APPEAL"

As I looked over the Darwin Uniting Church congregation, two Sundays after Tracy, I nearly choked up. There was Mary - living in a tent under the floorboards of a devastated home. There was Joan - going through hell every night because her three year old child wakes up screaming. Even the slightest breeze now triggers the child off. There is Bill - Chief of Police for Darwin, still impeccably dressed, but white and drawn, and showing the strain of the burden bearing down on him. There was Murray - a virtual dynamo of striving, who spilt his practical help over people like soothing ointment.

When it came time for the offering, I was at a loss. You see, then, we had no shops and no money economy. Gough Whitlam (the Prime Minister of Australia) was feeding us at communal kitchens, located in schools. Should I ask for an offering from people who had lost homes, clothing, cars and sometimes hope?

So, I asked them should we take up a collection? "Yes," they said. I was amazed by the unanimity. "Yes", they said, and "Let's give it to the Christmas Bowl Appeal." From those saints went \$232.93 to people whom they wanted to know, by an act of suffering compassion.

At that moment in time, a window opened in heaven, and God's church on earth became a fellowship of love.

Natural disasters then are not only times of misery. When we are trying to out class ourselves as faith-bearers, disasters give opportunity for EXPLODING THE LIVING WORD. This can be done in two ways. The first is in listening to lived moments, and the second is preaching.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LIVED MOMENTS

When people met each other immediately after Tracy, they all had a story to tell. Darwin was a city of storytellers. All these stories centred around a 'lived' moment.

Three weeks after the disaster, I was out in the northern suburbs with Maisie, my wife, burrowing into mounds of muck which were once homes. We were trying to save the valuables of people from our congregation who had been air-evacuated.

Beside one wrecked house, there lived a woman in a tent, sited under the remains of her partly dismembered home.

"What I remember," she said with a gush of words, "was the rain. It poured in on us. Sometimes it hit us when the wind was behind us. But it was never-ending. We all got wet. Then of course it mildewed and we lost it."

"Did your house get it bad?" I asked.

"Not too bad," she replied, "the rain came through the holes in the roof."

"I guess you could say", I ventured, "that your house was like an ark."

"Yes," she replied – "it was just that."

"Well," I said, "did you know that after the Ark rode out its wetness, God sent a rainbow of hope?"

LISTENING TO LIVED MOMENTS

The importance of listening to disaster 'lived moments' is because, if you are alert, you can build onto human consciousness systems of Christian meaning. Odd – isn't it - but life bristles with these opportunities when people want to talk. What happens is that in disasters, people receive strong, emotionally etched, visual impressions. Sometimes they are with a background to fear. Then seemingly, they have a deep urge to use words to express them.

Their words are to be heard as saying, "In that situation I was dead scared, and I want you to enter into this shaking of the soul with me, and hold me up." In talking they are taken into inter-personal relationships, where they can be enriched, a sense of Christian interpretation. What is important to grasp for the crisis management of people in disaster situations, is that their VISUAL IMAGES ARE THE BEGINNING OF THEOLOGY. (*There is a sense in which these visual images are akin to what has been called symbols elsewhere in these liturgical resources - ed.*)

So, we start from their upsetting, or marvelling, or wondering visual image then listen to their conversational recounting of the story, and then respond with Christian interpretation. If you allow this kind of life-activity theology to grab you, then you'll see that part of Jesus' own God-interpretation used this as a starting point. He employed visual images to bring home messages in story form of God's work and purpose in the world. "Behold a sower went out to sow ..." (Mk 4:3 RSV) "There was a man who had two sons..." (Lk.15:11 RSV)

Pity us white Australians, for our visual images are degrading daily, because of the hypnotic effect of saturation advertising. But motivate us Australians to learn from the Aboriginal people, whose visual images are very conscious, especially in their ceremonies. As it is, it takes a cyclone to teach us what our Aboriginal brothers and sisters, ALREADY know. That the visual image is the beginning of theology. And theology is a Jacob act of 'wrestling with God' in life, to find a meaning to it, in the midst of our rebellion and uncertainty. (Gen. 32: 22-30, RSV)

EXPLODING THE WORD

This, then, is one way of exploding the word. The other way of exploding the living word is to begin from the Biblical base line. It is true that once you give people a GOD IMAGE FROM DAILY LIFE AND ACTIVITY THEY WILL ACT IT OUT (or, of course, reject it). How I came about this revolutionary understanding of the Word's power, was in the context of preaching.

THE WORD IN A TROPICAL HOT HOUSE

God - I thought it can't be that hard. Here I sat in the study late Saturday night, exhausted by a week of hassle, demand, and uncommonly great heat. Sweat made the smallest effort uncomfortable. What put my spirit in the Pit, made famous by the Psalmists, was the need to preach a sermon to people in a few hours time. What should I do? Use vapid God talk words and impress with volume where there was little surging power? Or should I lay myself open to what the Spirit wanted to say to the church in the hot house city of post-cyclone Darwin. Then a thought came - at first it was like the cloud on a hot drought sky.

What I want, I said to myself, is not bread for eternity, but bread for ONE DAY. Gosh! It hit me ... that's what the desert wandering Israelites had to learn. Bread hoarded is mouldy bread, but bread for the day is living bread. What I'd been assuming for years, through my professors and teachers, was that I should have a gift of eternal truth, so that I could ride on a cloud nine spirituality in life and preaching. But all I was going to get was bread for today. And like everybody else, I'd have to do my fair share of worrying about tomorrow.

THE MODEL OF A RECONSTRUCTION MINISTRY

One of the men who modelled the reconstruction ministry to me, lived 2,500 years ago. He was a man who, like us, came home to devastation. In the year 587 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, smashed through the city walls of Jerusalem, making its contained town a shambles. Carted off as exiles were some of the prime leadership of the little nation of Judah. They were virtually prisoners in the city of Babylon. Later, they were released by Cyrus, the conquering Persian, who overthrew the Babylonians.

There in Babylon, Nehemiah, one of the exiled Jews, held a high court position. Hearing bad reports of the condition of the city of Jerusalem from the people there, Nehemiah took long service leave with the aim of helping rebuild the city. What a way to spend a holiday! He was a lone man work party. Compassionately and practically, he brought his own tools and materials with him.

Once there, he was so busy that he had no time to change his clothes. "So neither I nor my brethren nor my servants nor the man of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes." (Nehemiah 4:23) Actually his achievements had many of the features of the Israeli Entebbe airport commando raid. This was stealthy assessment of the situation, meticulous planning, and daring execution. Against his desire to help, Nehemiah had to avoid jealous hit men. The in-fighting as a community characteristic, was fierce.

SPEAKING INTO A DISASTER CONTEXT

Nehemiah's example then, spoke right into the Darwin situation. Reading him for preaching was an electrically contemporary experience. Everything we were living through was reproduced in his experience. We too had work parties; strife, especially centring on rival plans for rebuilding the city; personal character assassination; political power plays; fighting with the bureaucracy.

What a contemporary word came to us in and for preaching in Nehemiah! What we had to do, of course, was to take this book, which had lain fallow in my life for donkey's years, and apply it to our era of rubble and heartache, in the beer can capital of Australia.

Believe me it became, for us, an experience of God's Living Word in our context. For what its triple meaning became for us was the recognition that...

1. Perspiration is as important as inspiration in God's work.
2. We must always make adequate allowance for criticism and personal attack, when we are in tight reconstruction situations.
3. And, like Nehemiah, we must not be keen to take all the praise.

It was in this way that Nehemiah's experience became God's Word for the cyclone-stricken citizens of Darwin, Northern Territory.

Was this the end, though? No! - of course not, for Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. One greater than Nehemiah was crucified OUTSIDE Jerusalem's walls. This was appropriate for his work, unlike Nehemiah's and Ezra's, was not to rebuild Judaism, but a devastated, ill-disposed, evil, distorted human race.

His reconstruction job was the building of a new humanity. In this way, each disaster is an opportunity to call both the survivors and the new generation to a new future. Is it any wonder then how the apparently neglected Biblical passages, which speak of a culture shock dislocation, and disaster, lie dominant in the middle class Church? Ours thus becomes a soft option Christianity, more concerned with morals and social issues, than blood and guts survival, and panic theology. This leads, often, to us presenting a middle-class Christ, if not a silent Christ.

THE SILENCED CHRIST IN AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

Jim was fifty one. When he sat in my study tears streamed down his face. At fifty-one, Jim had faced a future which looked like a big hole entering nothingness. He had lost his home, his job, and his self-image.

“What’s there left for me?” he asked, in some anguish.

“You sure are upset”, I replied.

“At my age, who wants to start again? I’ve lost \$35,000 worth of home, and I did not insure against inflation. It would take me another 20 years just to get back to where I was.”

His words were like the black monsoon clouds outside. They hung over both of us. Looking at me accusingly, he concluded by saying,

“God must really be punishing me.”

“No”, I replied, “You must be punishing yourself”.

This was quite the wrong thing to say. Sensing there was no God-sharing with me, he thanked me politely for my time and left. I had just witnessed to a silenced Christ.

THE SILENCED CHRIST OF THE AUSTRALIAN CHURCH

If there was a theological tragedy about Darwin’s crisis, it was how so many people found they believed in a silent Christ. This is the establishment-presented Christ; the one who is always ‘ascending’ to some realm of omnipotent airy-fairy up-thereness; the Christ who is depicted as ALWAYS pure in motivation and clean in life and limb, likened to a supercharged Lord Baden Powell.

Was this not the Christ of the religious realm of our piety? The one to whom we go with tidy comfort-laden scripture passages, and ‘inspirational’ prayers? But in heaven’s name - how is this kind of above life, ascendancy Christ going to speak to a family who sit at a backyard Australian barbecue fire, while dad has a beer, and mum thinks she is worthily celebrating his birthday by boiling sags.

“DEVASTATE”

How is this pure and clean, and spotless Christ going to speak to a family of five, with their mother and father, all living on top of each other in a hastily acquired caravan. Or for that matter, the boys in sweat shirts, holding up a frothy beer, and talking about sheilas, and the ‘nags’, and the footy.

When in Australia, we talk about the visual Christ, which comes to us through our Christianity, how often He is presented as absolutely triumphant. Only though, in a way which makes him unreachable, and silent. The only Christ who will speak in Australia - and in Australian disasters - is the humiliated Christ. The one who knew what it was to be forsaken, to not lose his home only, but his life. The weak, contemptible Christ, who fell to his feet under the weight of the Cross.

The preachers of Australia, we learnt in Darwin, have to carry the new image of the Australian Christ. What Christ speaks to us? An accusing idealist? Or a 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief'? Only when we forget Christ's weak humanity, does He become silenced. It was to share our pain that Christ carried the Cross, and this is the Christ who spoke into the crisis and the pain of our lives. As the Church said, long ago before we corrupted God in our own image, 'imago Christ' precedes 'theologia Christ'.

LAWN MOWER MISSIONARY

Probably the best single investment of the outpouring of money and love, which showered upon us strugglers-in-the Word, in post-cyclone Darwin, was to fund a 'people ministry', as my mate, Graeme Bence called it. The need was felt for a field agent who could roam the acres of devastated northern suburbs. Mr Jonatani Rika, a Fijian who had been doing community development work in Yirrkala, was given the job of being a lawn-mower missionary.

Jonatani began his work in an atmosphere of some backlash against the Uniting Church. Evidently, some sects had been in the area, making use of people's distress for their purposes. So Jonatani quit the word game. He offered these people his skills as a handyman. He would simply show up at a devastated home and ask if he could help in cleaning away the debris, chop off high grass and so on.

Then during the normal work breaks during the humidity and the 'war' of the monsoon season, Jonatani would get his chance to talk. He then gave them counsel about how to get Church and government aid. As his grass cutting skills caught on, the Uniting Church bought him a power mower. Tracy, of course, had left few mowers intact.

Jonatani's wife, Iosa, provided an unexpected bonus. Accompanying her husband on his rounds, her lively winning personality caught on with people. She used her new friendships to invite people to her home. What Jonatani and his wife did in 90 days, opened the gates for many people.

In the end, this was what it was all about, and what a privilege - acting out the resurrection in the name of its originator, God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev Doug McKenzie.

Doug is a retired minister now living in Brisbane. This is an edited version of the article Doug wrote in 1980 when he was minister of St. Andrews Uniting Church, Brisbane.

Liturgy, Liturgists and Port Arthur

The plea on my answer phone told me something significant had happened. And I needed to respond.

It was a few hours later when the relatives started arriving at the Royal Hobart Hospital that we first began to sense the growing tragedy which has become known as 'Port Arthur'.

Much has now been said and written about this tragedy.

When you drop a stone in a lake, many ripples flow from the rupture, spreading over the surface of the lake. When you drop 35 stones into a lake all at once, the ripples flow and crisscross in violent reaction over the entire surface of the lake!

Because I work in several situations - parish and hospital - I felt it necessary to attempt to make several responses in those different situations. Thus I tried to shape what we said and did with imaginative liturgy.

A CANDLE IN THE DARKNESS

One of the most important liturgies I have ever prepared was the one offered on Sunday 5th May 1996 - the Sunday after Port Arthur.

Scots Church, situated one block from the Royal Albert Hospital, had been opened all week, and a small number of people had entered for peace, prayer and silence. When approached, they and others told their stories of connection:

- ✦ a son had a mate who had two mates who were killed;
- ✦ a mother who with her two daughters had visited Port Arthur the day before;
- ✦ a neighbour who was the brother of three people who were killed;
- ✦ a person who had car trouble, so visiting friends hired a car and drove down themselves, only to be killed;
- ✦ a person who felt he too might do what the alleged gunman had done, and because of his state of mind, committed suicide because he was frightened of himself;
- ✦ a mother, who on hearing her son had been seriously wounded and her daughter-in-law killed, suffered a heart attack and died.

So what to say. Yes, but equally important, what to do. The 'say' meant for me to be honest and real. Preacher, what do you see and feel ... ? The 'do' was liturgical.

As the people arrived for worship, 35 white candles were handed out. Not everyone got a candle. Then following the 'Celebration of Faith' those with candles were invited to come to the front, light their candle from the Christ candle and form a circle. Those who did not have a candle were then invited to form a loving circle around the candle bearers. Together we began the healing process offered when one is in community.

Those with candles were invited to keep and protect them on behalf of us all. I still see them in crystal cabinets and on mantels as I visit. And we talk about that experience and their experiences.

RESTORATION AND HEALING

As the first week following the tragedy drew to a close, the hospital chaplains met to plan a service of healing and restoration. It was decided to hold the service in the hospital forecourt, where the media had camped for the past week.

All staff were notified and each person was invited to bring along a symbol of their work to shape a tableau of service. Some did. They brought a phone, a bed, a trolley, a pager, a note book, gloves, a book of prayers and food.

The liturgy consisted of music, a meditation, two Bible readings and a prayer. As each section within the hospital is colour-coded, 42 coloured balloons - red, blue, clear, yellow and white were also used. The chaplains added another colour - green. Representatives from each section brought the balloons forward and then as a group, the balloons were released into the air to float over the hospital and the city. When they were released, there was absolute silence - not planned silence, it just happened.

A very special moment happened at the close of the service. Several hundred sprigs of greenery were offered as a symbol of renewal and hope. It was then that staff surged around the chaplains who were handing out the greenery. People took a sprig for themselves and several pieces for other staff members who couldn't be present. They clasped hands. They sighed in relief. The healing of the hospital had also begun.

THE MEDIA AS LITURGISTS

Some of my chaplain colleagues found the media presence intrusive and overpowering. They even interpreted the special hospital service as a cleansing moment, saying to the media: you no longer have a place here. I did not.

Sure, I've worked in the media for more than 25 years, so perhaps I've got used to their presence at major events. But despite the stories of complaint and some tasteless 'got-to-get-a-different-angle' tactics of a small number of media personnel, for me the media played an important liturgical role in the healing process.

The media are the ones who carry the stories and the images to the bulk of the people, who wait each morning or evening for news of the unfolding events. They are the ones, who despite using the stories for their agenda, touch the minds and hearts of others. Treated with respect and honesty, media personnel can be liturgists to many more people than those whom we usually set aside as, or expect to be, liturgists. For they too can help to begin the healing process.

LITURGY OF THE STONES

On all the occasions when I was required to give a liturgical response to the tragedy of Port Arthur, the experience of one personal imaginative liturgical event kept returning to me time after time.

During 1990, I had the privilege of spending some time as part of the community on the Isle of Iona in Scotland. During that stay I participated in the pilgrimage around the island.

One moment during that pilgrimage, we spent some time on the pebbled beach of St Columba. Legend has it, Columba landed on this beach on Pentecost Day, 563 AD, having previously been expelled from Ireland. He and his monks buried their boat on the beach then climbed a hill - Carn Cul ri Eirinn - a little further west. When he looked towards Ireland, it could not be seen. So he turned his back on his home country and headed north east across the island. Translated, the hill is called 'Hill with its back to Ireland'.

Remembering the story of Columba's journey, we were invited to reflect on our own life's journey. Then, naming some thing or event we wished to 'leave behind', we threw one of the smooth pebbles into the sea, turned our backs on the Bay, and made our way to the Mhachair (the island Common). There we shared lunch and fellowship together.

That liturgical experience has remained with me ever since and continues to shape my understanding of liturgy as being both story and deed with imagination. Being a storyteller, I don't wish to down-play that important oral tradition, *but it is in the weaving of both story and deed that 'imaginative liturgy' happens and a healing process can begin.*

In the aftermath of Port Arthur, liturgy is an important healing experience for many people – both Church liturgy and media liturgy. And I reckon, if we're wise, most will agree that's the way it should be in our electronic media-saturated culture.

Rev Rex Hunt

At the time of the massacre, Rex was minister at Scots Uniting Church, Hobart and was a Chaplain at the Royal Hobart Hospital. He is now minister at St. James' Uniting Church, North Woden, Canberra.

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Port Arthur Anniversary Services

The excellent article, "In Remembrance: Post Disaster Rituals and Symbols", by Anne Eyre (AJEM 1999) provides a valuable framework to reflect on some of the immediate responses to the Port Arthur massacre in 1996 and more specifically, on which to evaluate the Port Arthur Anniversary Church Services held in Melbourne in 1997 and 1998, and why one was not held in 1999. This paper examines, from a sociological Symbolic Interactionist perspective, and, I may add, with hindsight, some of the events that occurred after the shootings at Port Arthur.

The value of symbols and ritual has been explored by many authors and in many disciplines. Indeed the sociological perspective Symbolic Interactionism, first developed from the work of a school of American philosophers is concerned with the "inner or phenomenological aspects of human behaviour".

In a study which provides another perspective on this topic, Herbert Blumer (1962) suggests that Symbolic Interactionism rests on three basic premises:

That human beings act on the basis of meanings that they give to objects and events, rather than simply reacting to external stimuli such as social forces or internal stimuli such as organic drives.

Those meanings arise from the process of interaction rather than simply being present at the outset and shaping future action.

That meanings are the result of interpretive procedures employed by people within interaction contexts.

Mead (1934), sums up the Interactionist perspective, "without symbols there would be no human interaction. Social life can only proceed if the meanings attributed to the symbols are largely shared by members of the society."

A symbol then, is a sign that points to itself and away from itself. A symbol does not simply stand for an object or an event, it defines them in a particular way and indicates a response to them.

As Eyre points out "Post disaster rituals and symbols have significant implications for disaster management, not only in terms of practical, logistical arrangements such as crowd control, but also in terms of managing sensitively and appropriately the range of psychological, social and political issues associated with these aspects of the immediate post impact and longer term rehabilitative stages of disaster".

Rev Syd Smale

PORT ARTHUR SUNDAY 28TH APRIL, 1996

Port Arthur is a historical site and a former penal colony in Tasmania, Australia, On Sunday 28th April, 1996 a lone gunman shot and killed 35 men, women and children and seriously wounded a further 29 people. For many other people the legacy of that terrible day still continues.

"I can but keep surviving to enshrine their spirit in the world the incredible unconditional love, the warmth and freedom, the dance, the spontaneity, cuddling and kissing, they are no longer there. I will however, proudly endeavour to keep their spirit alive throughout my life. My love for them will never die and never be taken."

(Walter Mikacs, whose wife and two children were among those killed.)

Shock and horror occurred all over Australia when the news of the killings and the number of victims became known. The news of the shootings was bad enough but that the mass slaying had occurred in Australia which had been relatively sheltered from this kind of event added to the dismay and sense of unbelief.

"The greatest massacre in Australian history" screamed one national newspaper, conveniently forgetting the history of Port Arthur as a penal colony and the extermination of the aboriginal people in Tasmania. Still it made good copy.

Expressions of support, anguish and vexation poured into Port Arthur and Tasmania, not only from within Australia but from all over the world. As had happened at Bradford, Hillsborough, Dunblane and Aberfan, tributes of flowers soon formed a tapestry of colour around the Broad Arrow Café where the first shootings occurred.

A message of condolence from the "people of Dunblane" was the first of many that would be sent to the grieving and bewildered people of Port Arthur struggling to come to terms with what had happened as a result of the shootings by one of their own community.

One of the early areas of conflict was the length of time that the people at the site were detained by the police. The shootings encompassed a wide area so that the crime scene was extensive. People could not understand why the delay in allowing them to move away from this death site took so long.

The growing presence of media representatives became so pressing that arrangements were made to bus them around the site and to give them sufficient access to sites appropriate for their need to obtain information and film.

As an unbelieving nation came to grips with what had happened, all over Australia, churches opened their doors encouraging people to pray for those affected by the tragedy. In many churches, halls and memorial sites people gathered and candles were lit.

Ecumenical services were held all over Australia and in Canberra, senior politicians of both major parties offered their prayers and condolences to those affected by the events of that day. Many churches were staffed by counsellors offering their services. Services were quickly arranged for the Port Arthur community and, in Hobart, an Ecumenical Service was planned and held at St David's Anglican Cathedral.

While not evident at the time, the first of the many conflicts were already beginning to surface. For example, some of the people of Port Arthur who travelled to Hobart for the service subsequently complained that the service was for the politicians, dignitaries and Heads of Churches rather than for those specifically affected by the shootings. Later the complaint was that the focus was on the site and not the people.

On July 15, over 700 people attended a cleansing ceremony at the Port Arthur historic site. The ceremonies also involved members of Tasmania's Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim communities as well as Christian. Given the multicultural nature of the Australian population, the needs of faiths other than Christian are sometimes forgotten.

In time, a memorial cross with plaque was erected with the promise of a more permanent memorial. However as was the case with a number of the planned memorials listed by Anne Ayre, the very thing that could have led to a unifying of the Port Arthur community contributed to an extended controversy.

The crux of the problem was what to do with the Broad Arrow Café, the scene of the shootings. A strange dichotomy arose. Many in the community wanted it to be removed and razed to the ground. But many of those who actually lost loved ones in the café felt a sense of attachment and wanted it retained.

It was not until January 1999 three years later that the problem was resolved when agreement was reached that the plan for a permanent memorial would include the remaining walls of the Broad Arrow Café and would include a fountain and reflection pool.

The memorial will not dominate the historic site but its importance cannot be underestimated. It's part of history whether we like it or not. Areas have to be set aside for people to reflect, to be on their own and to contemplate what happened. The memorial cross, erected after the shootings, will remain.

Conflict still exists over the distribution of the \$3.6 million appeal money. A committee was established to distribute the money working to a formula described by the Tasman Council Mayor as a leveling-out formula. Those getting workers compensation were not to get anything under the Criminal Compensation Act. Glen Martin, whose parents were killed at the Seascope boarding house, said " I don't believe that the right victims got the money ... those who are having psychiatric treatment got the money but the people who are trying to get on with their lives are missing out."

Initially the people of Port Arthur turned inward, reaching out to each other. Such was the intensity of this process of bonding and fusion that it couldn't last. Friendships became strained, personal relationships began to disintegrate, couples broke up and marriages broke down. The distribution of appeal money and the selection of people for bravery awards aided this process of disintegration.

Rifts began to appear in other areas as well, eg between the Port Arthur Historic Site, the main employer on the peninsula and the mainstay of the local economy, and the local community. The turn over of staff in a normal year would rarely reach more that 10% of the workforce. In the immediate aftermath of April 28, 1996 the figure stood at 80%.

Criticisms were beginning to surface. Talk of a conspiracy was beginning to be heard. "There is a cover-up going on to protect the Tasmanian Tourist Industry".

The desire for some visitors to concentrate on the shootings rather than on the historic site as a whole, became an issue and led to the erection of a sign at the toll booth, itself the site of seven shootings:

The Port Arthur Shootings - April 28, 1996

*This event has touched us all and causes us much pain
Written information is available from the staff
However, we ask you not to discuss the incident with us.*

This, then, was part of the background to the first anniversary event held in Melbourne, Victoria on April 28 1997.

Out of the 35 people killed, 12 resided in Victoria and many more Victorians were among the seriously wounded. Since that day in 1996 a strong survivors support group has been established with some people coming from inter-state which indicates continuing value in meeting the needs of the members.

Had the survivors group been more visible in 1997 and the Victorian Council of Churches planning group more aware of the importance of including the survivors in the planning of the service, the service would not have ended up in being mainly clergy directed and planned. Having members of the survivors group involved would not necessarily have eliminated disagreements within the survivors group itself over content and process as was evident in the planning for the 1998 anniversary.

Representatives of the Roman Catholic, Anglican and the Uniting Church formed the major part of the worship planning committee. The Assistant Manager of the State Human Services Disaster Recovery Unit, a Human Services Deputy Recovery Manager, and the consultant psychologist to the Victorian Dept. of Human Services, all of whom had been deeply involved in the initial response to the actual shootings, and two survivors also added input into the planning of the service.

The first discussion was controversial. The clergy agreed that the theme should be the keystone of the Christian faith, that of forgiveness and reconciliation. But were they expecting too much? Were the survivors ready and willing to forgive, was the concern.

The consultant psychologist believed that the survivors needed to face the issue of forgiveness if they were not to continue to live strengthened only by the need to hate. "To do so", he said, "continued their sufferings as victims."

That was all very well, but where were the survivors in the journeying?

During the past year there had been many articles and interviews on the subject of grief and significant loss. "Lives torn apart by evil insanity", "Time to talk". "The living dead, coming to terms with tragedy". To what extent had they understood, far less accepted?

The decision was made to go with the theme of "Forgiveness and Renewal", and that the service be held in a central, downtown, bluestone century old church which gave an atmosphere of timeless solidarity and security. To involve representatives of many denominations and other faiths a procession of Heads of Churches and other clergy and leaders marked the opening. Survivors took part in the service (not a significant part but a part), and a liturgy appropriate for the occasion was agreed upon. No specific invitation was made to the Government or to their representatives though some did come in response to the general public invitation.

At a similar Memorial Service at Port Arthur, in the old convict church, fallen oak leaves symbolizing change was to be the focus of the first memorial service. Over the past year visitors to the site had donated 2000 daffodil bulbs to go towards a mass planting in a special garden location. To link the service in Melbourne with Port Arthur, daffodil bulbs were to be given out to all who attended and asked to plant them in their own garden. It was interesting to hear in the aftermath of the second anniversary service in 1998, people asking each other how well their daffodil bulbs had grown.

There was also a desire to let people know that there were still people who could be contacted if anyone felt the need for counselling. What was not wanted was an announcement to that effect during the service or to include a list of names in the order of service. What happened was that the bulbs were placed into a small plastic bag, bound with a ribbon and a small card attached which read on one side, "a symbol of love and hope" and on the other a list of contact names of counsellors. A small child and a survivor carried the bulbs in a basket into the church and placed them in the centre of a circle of burning candles to symbolize the defeat of darkness.

Arrangements were also made with the media to make a space in the church for one camera, the film to be shared among the stations, access to survivors who were willing to be interviewed in exchange for no media presence in the adjoining hall where lunch was to be served. There was a need after the service to ensure privacy and emotional security for the survivors, family and friends and, if required, counselling. The media kept to the arrangement. Indeed, it became clear that the media, who needed to get their stories, were not insensitive to the needs of the survivors and their families and, if given the opportunity, were willing to help.

White doves were released as the congregation came out of the church, again a symbol of peace.

The major question over which there was great discussion and some disagreement was whether there would be a prayer for the perpetrator. In the end the answer was in the affirmative, although that was at the insistence of the clergy. If the theme of the service was to be forgiveness and renewal, they argued such a prayer had to be included.

There were short prayers "For those who have died", "For those who mourn", "For those who survived", with a brief silence between each with background music played on a harp. (There was a concern that complete silence may be too difficult for some of the congregation to cope with.) Then came this prayer "For the perpetrator of this tragedy:

*"Eternal God, from his cross of shame
Your son forgave those who conspired and put him to death.
Give us the strength, and help us through your grace,
To move beyond vengeance towards him who perpetrated this horror
To forgiveness and pity in the circumstances which led to such a crime.
In his anguish, may he know remorse and your forgiveness.
May the offering in prayer of our forgiveness be the beginning of our own peace.
These things we ask in the name of our murdered, risen and victorious Saviour,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen"*

The clergy didn't have to wait long for a reaction. As soon as the people were in the hall some of the survivors angrily asked how we could have possibly thought that they could pray for "that Bastard". We had failed; it was too soon, too much to expect. We were naive, to say the least.

Some months later, at one of the gatherings of the survivors, one of the most vocal persons in her denouncement of the prayer came up and apologized for her reaction after the service. "You know," she said, "we were so angry with you for asking us to pray for the perpetrator that all we could do afterwards was to share our anger, hatred, disgust and rage at you, the event and our pain. And you know, when some of us met some time afterwards, we discovered that, for all of us, it was the first time we had really vented our feelings and we felt all the better for it." "Is that" she asked, "the beginning of forgiveness?"

When the Victorian Council of Churches was asked to organize the Second Anniversary Service in 1998 there was some doubt as to whether such a service hindered rather than helped the survivors to get on with life and to put Port Arthur behind them. That was certainly the view of a psychologist.

However, the gatherings and picnics were not only continuing, the numbers were growing with new members from other states. It would seem on that evidence that there was still a need, so a service was arranged but this time with a major input and participation by the survivors and fewer clergy.

The theme agreed to was "Remembering our Journey" and the location was the Lutheran Church at the developing new area of Southbank on the Yarra River. The church was a relatively new building; bright, modern with an outlook to the city and the river. The atmosphere was of newness and life and the service reflected that image. As for the first service, the Chaplain of the Hobart Hospital flew into Melbourne and spoke to the congregation. He had already met some of the survivors three years previously as they arrived for treatment from Port Arthur and also the families who came to identify the dead and to grieve with the living. He had gone down to Port Arthur just before catching the plane for Melbourne and described the new beginnings and growth that was taking place at Port Arthur.

"I sat at the water's edge," he said. "I watched the sun rise and give birth to a new day and I rejoiced in that rebirthing".

In Melbourne, the sun was shining after the rain. There was movement and colour among the people. The boats were moving along the river, and the service, too, had an atmosphere of renewal and new life. Perhaps the most moving, moment came when one of the survivors read this piece:

*"We believe in the gift of sorrow, which carries us back to humanness
And reminds us of the way we dreamed life could be
And marks the love and sacrifice of many people.
Love which calls us to find new paths through the blurred landscape of our tears.
We believe that, despite betrayal and violence in ways we do not fully understand
We are not left alone, that many people are standing with us and along side us.
And we believe that we need not stay sorrowing forever,
But that our spirits and hopes can rise and lift us as surely as day follows night."*

This year, 1999, there was no request for an official anniversary service. Instead the survivors, families and friends met in a garden and had their own service. It was a full service with prayers, poems and readings, some of which had been written by the survivors. There were moments of silence to remember the past, those that had been killed or injured and for the survivors themselves. The service over, they then had a picnic.

They have one regret. The Victorian survivors wish for a "Memorial Place", somewhere where they can gather to remember, a plaque which celebrates survival. To date, this request has not been granted.

The journey out of the night continues but for some, still slowly.

There is anger, remorse, loss of power and control, conflict over tourists. There are those on work cover and those without, those who received Appeal monies and those who missed out. There is the need to continue the tourist industry on which the livelihood of the people of Port Arthur depends. There are those still grieving and those angry about the new \$5 million tourist centre which is being promoted as a catalyst for Port Arthur's spiritual, not to mention financial, rebirth. Memorials and preserving the past are balanced against getting on with living in, and for, the future. A need to hate and to express that hatred and anger still exists. There remains the question of the place, site, time and number of anniversaries, who conducts them, who they are for, participation, participants:

"Post-disaster rituals and symbols are a valid and important area of study because they have significant implications for disaster management, not only in terms of practical, logistical arrangements, but also in terms of managing sensitively and appropriately the range of psychological, social and political issues associated with these aspects of the immediate post-impact and longer term rehabilitative stages of disaster"

(Anne Eyre)

To ignore this advice is to add to the pain and delay the recovery.

Rev Syd Smale

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Post script.

This year Australia welcomed many refugees from Kosovo and housed them in a number of States. Those housed in Tasmania approached the Trauma and Counseling Unit requesting support and assistance with organizing a "Homage for the Kosovars" and inviting the staff of the Haven Centre where they were housed to participate.

The event occurred almost one month after their arrival. All the residents were taken to Hobart, the capital of Tasmania, where they silently paraded down one of the main streets, each carrying a lighted candle. The group then gathered around an Albanian flag and mementos and symbols of the war and their displacement were placed on it. There was a moment's silence, then a message of thanks to the Australian people was read.

A group of Kosovars then took a bottle containing a message of peace to the water's edge and launched it into the sea. Songs and speeches completed this simple but meaningful ceremony.

Truly grief and pain knows no boundaries.

Festival of Journeys - Port Arthur

This was a whole of community event based largely at the school (Kindergarten to Year 10) and involving the construction of wonderful translucent paper lamps, figures and a large boat. On the day of the event, a 'fair' was set up at the historic site with food and beverage booths, braziers made from 44 gallon drums, which had been polished to a metallic glow and which had holes patterned into them to allow the firelight to produce starlike patterns.

At dusk a parade of children (about 70) carrying their lit lanterns snaked down the hill, followed by large paper figures carried by adult members of the community. Those participating in the procession moved into a large circle surrounded by several hundred members of the community. After several circuits the procession stopped, lowered their lamps and turned to the centrepiece, the large paper boat. It was now dark and a huge fiery torch was applied to the boat as it was sent out on the water.

At this point the whole crowd was hushed, holding hands and focused on this symbol of casting out our devils. It was truly memorable.

Susan Parr

Killing The Fire Dragon

(This ceremony was conducted along with clergy and members of the local churches in Macedon, VIC, following the Ash Wednesday bushfires which ravaged this area on 16 February 1983. Immediately after the dragon was “killed”, there was an open air service of thanksgiving with a heavy emphasis on community participation.)

Three months post-disaster, emotional problems in children were becoming evident. Some were not sleeping, afraid of fire, and reluctant to be separated from their families.

A Community Theatre group from the City of Melbourne asked to work with the fire affected people, families and children. After much preparation and rehearsal, a community theatre production called “Killing the Fire Dragon” was performed in the open air to hundreds of local residents, and with the participation of many community members. “Killing the Fire Dragon” was a cathartic experience and was a practical expression of the tears that both adults and children had as a result of their experiences. Many teachers and parents reported that there was significant allaying of the children’s anxieties and that the experience had a calming effect.

Some community residents found they were able to pick up their creative skills again and felt a return to normality. Community Development Officers assisted with the production of “Killing the Fire Dragon” — a rewarding experience and some light relief.

Exorcising Trauma

Nearly 50 years ago, Noreen Hester of Cobden (Victoria) miscarried the infant she had carried for four months, and was sent home from hospital with nothing but the pain.

Even now, it's obvious the memories still upset her as she recalls the words of the sister as she left. "Come back in 12 months time and have twin girls", were the well-meaning, whispered words, and nothing more was said.

"This happened to me in 1951 and since then I've never been able to let go of the grief," she says in a soft voice. "In those days you didn't talk about it."

"That pain of having a miscarriage, I've never forgotten it. Having children, once you've got that baby in your arms, the pain of childbirth is gone. But I can still feel the pain of losing that baby."

Given her lack of opportunity to grieve, it's not surprising to hear Noreen speak of the sad dreams that have plagued her since the loss.

"Since then I have always dreamt about babies. In all my dreams there is always a baby in it. I don't actually see it, it's not my son or my daughter, you don't see the face, but it's always this baby."

But last Sunday, Noreen finally had an opportunity to confront her loss when she attended a service to remember babies lost through miscarriage, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, abortion, adoption, stillbirth, neo-natal death or any other cause.

"I thought, 'this is the way I'm going to say goodbye to this little baby' - because it was a baby - at four months it was a baby - and I walked in quite sprightly and sat down," Noreen said.

What she discovered was an enormous sense of relief. "During the service they had the lighting of the candle for us to let go. When we came back and sat down, I just sobbed like a child.

"I did cry when I came home from hospital ... but then on Sunday I just sobbed like I never sobbed before and the lady behind me just rubbed my back. If you cry sometimes you feel uncomfortable, but I didn't feel uncomfortable crying there. I just let go and we all just seemed 'one'. You couldn't really let go of the whole thing, but you were able to let go of some of the hurt that you'd had."

When remembering the loss of an infant, tears are never far away, whether the loss is a few months old or decades old.

About 20 people attended the non-denominational Christian-based service at Macqueen's Funerals in Camperdown (Victoria) and organised by Macqueen's and Kaye Mitchell, a Lay Preacher in the Uniting Church.

“Years ago, when women gave birth to stillborn babies, babies were simply taken away. It’s now that they’re starting to ask ‘what did happen to my child?’ and ‘where did it go?’,” says Kaye.

It was for women in this circumstance - as well as for those who lost children more recently - that she decided to hold the service.

Kaye says she hopes the idea will be picked up by churches in the region but she would be willing to hold another service if there was sufficient demand.

Whilst there can be no doubt support networks and the treatment of infant deaths has improved since the 50’s, there is still a culture of forgetting. Kaye says, “There are some things you just don’t talk about; you ‘get on with life’,” she says. They (people) forget that there are people that are hurt by it.”

For Alison Vagg of Camperdown the attitude of forgetting has been one of the most difficult things to deal with since her 18-month-old grand-daughter died of cot death.

“My little grand-daughter died nine months ago and I hadn’t been able to ... I just felt as though I wasn’t being able to remember her,” she says.

As each person arrived on Sunday, he or she had the opportunity to write down the name of the infant lost and these names were later read out as part of the service. “That was one part of the service that really applied,” says Alison.

“Just hearing his name mentioned, to hear somebody else mention her name, it made me feel good, a sense of relief and a sense of comfort.”

Losing her grandchild was like a double blow, explains Alison, fighting back tears. “As a grandparent, you cop two lots because you see your own daughter - you can’t help her - and you also have lost a grandchild.”

One of the hardest things for Alison was dealing with people’s tendency to pretend her granddaughter, Shayna Wight, never existed. “The thing that I hate most of all is that people will not mention her. I sort of feel as though I had not had a grandchild. I thought, you’re convincing yourself that you did have a grandchild but you didn’t really. Then I thought, that’s stupid, I used to go and babysit her so I did have a grandchild and I’ve got all those photos to prove I had a grandchild.”

From the photos in Alison’s lounge room, it is clear memories of her granddaughter, Shayna, are still part of her life. A picture of Shayna and her mother beaming amid Christmas decorations stands out from the rest. Alison refers to it as her “anti-depressant picture”.

“She always make me smile when I look at it. I feel like she’s got a little secret that she’s laughing at,” Alison explains.

Helen Dickson of Camperdown has never let anything stop her from talking about her son, Ashley, who died from cot death only 12 weeks after he was born. “My son was a cot death 13 years ago yet I was fine to talk about it. I was allowed to. Even my two daughters, who’ve come after, talk about their brother as if they’d actually met him.”

“I like to know that he existed for 12 weeks, and prior to that, I carried him the nine months so he was part of my life and I want him remembered. He was the only son I had.”

But Helen acknowledges the culture of forgetting and moving on is still surprisingly prominent in the community. “I think people just can’t cope with other people’s grief”, she says. And it wasn’t just the implications that it should be forgotten but the rumours and gossip that followed an infant’s death that hurt. She says, “One thing you get against you is the innuendo, how ‘you killed your baby’. Like ‘I killed my son. I smothered him with the sheepskin he was on. I shouldn’t have had him on that. And I overdosed him on the antibiotics he was on the week before he died’, you know.”

From the dry sound in her voice, it’s clear Helen has dealt with and built up an immunity to this kind of gossip. “That’s what you’ve got to put up with,” she adds.

For Helen, Sunday’s service was an opportunity to remember her son. About 18 months ago she lost her eldest daughter in a car accident. Since then she felt like she hadn’t taken the time to remember Ashley. But the service was also an opportunity to rekindle a supportive role.

Shortly after losing her son, Helen took part in a six-week grief counselling course. As well as teaching her ways to cope with her own grief, it taught her not to make assumptions about other people’s suffering.

“A lot of the cliches are used, like people saying, ‘Oh, I know how you feel when so and so died’ – this is something I’ve always now been aware of, never to say that, because I don’t know how they feel, each death is different,” she says.

“My mother died, but my baby died, and it’s not the same. Each death is different.”

It didn’t take long for Helen to turn her grief in a positive direction, starting up a support service with friends, for women who may have had similar experiences. While the group has since faded into the background, Helen says she is occasionally called on and is still willing to give support.

Giving this support to others has in some way helped her come to terms with her own suffering, she says.

Alison too, has turned her grief in a positive direction. For the past month she has been making dolls for siblings of infants who die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The calico dolls are left plain except for a ribbon tied in a bow around the neck, so each child can decorate her own doll, Alison explains, “I’m doing something constructive and I’m helping some other little child - and also I’m doing it for Shayne because she would have loved them.”

As for Noreen, having had a chance to say goodbye, which perhaps could have made a difference 50 years ago, she now wants to make sure other people with similar experiences are given the same opportunity.

“Just to let people know (the service) was on and hopefully, if there is enough interest, another will be held to help other people.”

This article is slightly edited from one that appeared in the "The Standard", daily newspaper in Warrnambool (Vic.), on Saturday April 3rd 1999, P21f. It was written by staff reporter Katie Hyder. It is printed here with permission.

Sunday Worship, after the Furnace

(In January 1997, several fires believed to be deliberately lit, burnt through the Dandenong Region in Victoria. "In addition to three deaths, 41 homes were destroyed and 44 other buildings destroyed, over 2,500 people were evacuated from the fires.")

The Sunday worship for 26th January at Sherbrooke Uniting Church had been planned. It was to be a covenant service. But a bushfire changed all that.

The Rev David Kim was in his second year of ministry at the church in the Dandenongs. After a whiff of smoke and a blazing wildfire, he suddenly became pastor to a community in disaster. His well planned Sunday service had to change, quickly.

"We couldn't go ahead pretending nothing had happened, when so much had happened," he said.

So the service, the first after the fires, became a congregational sharing time. No sermon and no solemn liturgy, but there were new symbols and plenty of "soul deep" prayers.

"Each person present was invited to share their story, to 'unload' their experience of the fires," said Mr. Kim. "They spoke of their survival, what fire alarms mean, how they were separated from their families."

The Rev Sylvia Widdicombe, a retired minister who lives in the parish, shared the leading of the service during the discussion.

Mr. Kim said two symbols were passed around: a burnt, scarred coin, salvaged from the fires, and a newspaper indicating the community's pain and how its members had suffered.

"This is a community issue, and I don't know how I can help a whole community", he said. "Yet in one small way our church became very good at healing".

Rev Kim Cain

This article appeared in 'Crosslight', the Synod newspaper of the Uniting Church in Australia in Victoria, No. 54, March. 1997, p.3, and is used with permission.

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LITURGIES

Bus Crash at Maryborough, Queensland	Copyright Maryborough Ministers Fellowship 1994 & 1995.
The Port Arthur Tragedy Service of Restoration In The Aftermath of Port Arthur Anniversary of the Tragedy at Port Arthur	Rev Rex Hunt, Chaplain, Royal Hobart Hospital. Rev Rex Hunt, Minister, Scots Uniting Church, Hobart. Contains a prayer used at Dunblane, Scotland.
Hoddle Street Massacre Strathfield Shopping Centre Massacre	Put together by a group of local ministers. Hoddle Street Service was amended for use here by the Strathfield-Homebush Ministers Association led by Rev Michael Barnes (UCA) and Fr Paul Ryan, the local Catholic Priest.
Newcastle Earthquake	Ecumenical Service at Christ Church Anglican Cathedral. Liturgist was Dean of the Cathedral, the very Rev Graeme Lawrence.
The Blackhawk Accident	Service put together by Chaplain Father Jim Cosgrove of the Rochedale Catholic Church, Brisbane.
Kew Cottage Fires	Held at Anglican Cathedral of St Paul, Melbourne.
Thredbo Slip Disaster Prayer Service for Ecumenical Gathering	Organised by the Uniting Church in Australia and Roman Catholic ministers. (Sources of some materials were not recorded and remain unknown.)
Memorial Service	as above
Bushfires Ash Wednesday Commemorative Service Other Bushfire Resources	Rev Chris Howard, Terang Uniting Church Rev Pam Wyley, then a local councillor in the Cockatoo area, now Uniting Church Minister at Bright, VIC.
Liturgy for a Community in Shock or Grief After Violence or Accident	Rev Colleen O'Reilly, 1996, part of a dissertation towards degree of Doctor of Ministry (San Francisco Theological Seminary).

WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR USE IN RESPONSE TO PERSONAL TRAGEDIES

The Value of Life

Hosted by St George Uniting Church, East St Kilda, VIC.

Notes & Resources for use in response to Suicides

Philip Christian is an ordained Baptist minister who works as a Celebrant and in Family Support in Geelong, VIC. Mrs Kaye Mitchell, Uniting Church Lay Preacher living in Camperdown VIC. Her specialist ministry is in conducting funerals, often for those not desiring a church service Philip Christian, Baptist minister working as a Celebrant in Ocean Grove and Geelong areas, VIC.

Extracts from Funeral Services for those who have Suicided

Service of Remembrance and Healing

Jenny Stephens, Lay Assistant at Uniting Church in Derrinallum, VIC. Text is a combination of two annual Remembrance Services held before Christmas in 1996 and 1997. She has used some material from an Alfred Hospital (Melbourne) Service and a publication by the Compassionate Sisters.

Prayer in the above service by

Ian Millend, Chaplain, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, VIC.

Liturgies for Late Miscarriage, Stillbirth or Neonatal Death

Rev Dr Colleen O'Reilly, 1996, part of a dissertation towards degree of Doctor of Ministry (San Francisco Theological Seminary).

Service to follow the Birth of a Stillborn Child or the Death of a Newly-Born Child

Prepared by the Uniting Church in Australia National Commission on Liturgy (1994) which holds the copyright on it. It is reproduced with permission from the Commission. Mrs Kaye Mitchell, Uniting Church Lay Preacher living in Camperdown VIC.

(For the young...) A Memorial Service

OTHER WORSHIP RESOURCES

Rev Kaye Ronalds, parish of Capricorn Coast, QLD, Uniting Church in Australia.

Rev Rob Gotch, Uniting Church minister at Camperdown, VIC and later at Ascot Vale, VIC.

Rev Jeff Shrowder, Merbein Uniting Church, VIC.

Mrs Kaye Mitchell, Uniting Church Lay Preacher at Camperdown VIC.

"Ideas For Worship" JBCE, Melbourne, 1994 and were used in "New Life from Drought", Philip Liebelt & Noel Nicholls (ed.) "Gentle Rain on Parched Earth" JBCE, Melbourne, 1996, p.24. Used with permission.

Fr. Lindsay Howie, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Keppel, QLD. This prayer originally appeared in Philip Liebelt & Noel Nicholls (ed.) "Gentle Rain on Parched Earth" JBCE, Melbourne, 1996, p.24. Used with permission.

ARTICLES

Preparing a Liturgy in Response to a Disaster

Laurie Green, "Let's Do Theology; A Pastoral Care Book", Mowbray, Great Britain, 1990.
Philip Liebelt & Noel Nicholls (ed.) "Gentle Rain on Parched Earth" JBCE, Melbourne, 1996.
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Chris Robert, "Information Required to Design a Meaningful Liturgy for a Community After a Bushfire." An unpublished research project for studies in "Liturgy for the Unchurched", United Theological College, Sydney, undated.
Brian Smith, "Rites of Passage-Symbolism, Ritual, Liturgy and Theology in Disaster Recovery", in Post-Disaster Ministry within South Australia, Uniting Church in Australia, South Australian Synod, 1989.
Various letters, papers and phone conversations from a variety of ministers who have taken a role in post-disaster liturgies, including Rev Shirley Maddox, Rev Michael Barnes and Pastor Grahame Abrahams, all settlements in the UCA, NSW Synod; Rev John van Riet, settled in UCA, Victorian Synod and Rev Syd Smale, a Uniting Church minister who co-ordinates the Victorian Council of Churches Relief Committee.

A Theology from Natural Disaster

Rev Doug McKenzie. This is an edited version of the article he wrote in 1980 when minister of St Andrews Uniting Church, Brisbane, QLD.

Liturgy, Liturgists and Port Arthur

Rev Rex Hunt, Minister at Scots Uniting Church, Hobart and Chaplain at Royal Hobart Hospital. This article first appeared in the September 1996 edition of "New Springboards" and is reprinted here with the permission of the Uniting Church Commission on Liturgy.

Exorcising Trauma

Article slightly edited from one that appeared in "The Standard", daily newspaper in Warnambool (VIC) on Saturday April 3rd, 1999, p 21f. It was written by staff reporter Katie Hyder and is printed here with permission.

Sunday Worship After the Furnace

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REVISION HISTORY

March 2003

Grammatical corrections to pages 15, 19, 30, 64, 68, 71, 72, 112, 116, 117, 118, 138, 147, 157, 163, 171, 176.

Revision history, page 177 added.

Website notice, page 178 added.

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